

BOOKREVIEWS

Historical Atlas of Immunology

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Editors Julius M Cruse & Robert E Lewis - Publisher Taylor & Francis - www.tandf.co.uk, ISBN 1842142178, Price £60.00, hardback, Publish date 17 February 2005, 200 pages

Immunology may be viewed as a relatively new discipline but, as this book illustrates in the first chapter, some of the basic observations at its core were made in Greek times. In more recent history, Immunology was commonly taught as a branch of Microbiology, but is now a well defined subject in biomedical science and is constantly in the press in some context or other. It therefore seems perfect timing to publish the first edition of a historical atlas of Immunology, which illustrates in a comprehensive manner the key findings and people involved in the development of the tenets of immunology. There certainly is a gap in the market that this book fills in many respects. Its main strength lies in its clear elucidation of the progressive thought and acquisition of knowledge in any particular area of immunology.

The atlas is laid out in chapters which deal with immunological findings chronologically. Starting with early understandings of contagious diseases and smallpox variolation programs (culminating in the supremely successful smallpox vaccination), we learn about the discovery of B cells and antibodies, complement, allergy, cellular immunity and tumour immunology. The latter chapters cover such topics as autoimmunity, immunohaematology, immunogenetics and immunological methods. Reading many of these chapters, it was striking that while some findings were serendipitous (the discovery of antibody production in the bursa of chickens for example), most immunological concepts arose out of painstaking research.

In each chapter, the scientists and their findings are covered, with terms explained in highlighted boxes. Although this layout adds greatly to the understanding and the context of key findings, I did wonder whether it was strictly necessary to publish in many cases 3 or 4 photographs of some of the, albeit eminent, researchers, often with the title pages from their original journals and books. The penultimate chapter discusses the setting up of immunological societies and associated journals, predominantly in America. In this context, it would have been interesting to have seen a discussion of the huge expansion in number of immunology journals and the specialist fields they cover. The book concludes with a concise listing of the landmarks in the history of immunology, which like some of the rest of the book only took us to 1996, an indicator perhaps of the mammoth task involved in compiling such a tome.

Although the authors state that the book could appeal to the educated lay person, I think the depth of coverage, even when explaining key terms, might floor some people. For this reason, however, it will be welcomed by medical scientists, in particular immunologists, who want to get their background facts straight. Like many of these types of books this is for 'dipping into'; perfect for those moments when one needs to be reminded of how earlier findings have led us to today's understanding of, for example, antibody synthesis, structure and function.

Despite any criticisms of the layout, this was essentially an enjoyable and highly informative read that will remind immunologists and scientists in general why Immunology has always been so fascinating and why scientists continue to strive to understand the complexity of the immune system.

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Immunology, Infection and Immunity

Editors Gerald B Pier, Jeffery B Lyczak, Lee M Wetzler – Publisher ASM Press - www.asmpress.org, ISBN 1 55581 246 5, Price \$79.95 (UK Price unknown), hardback

Immunology, Infection and Immunity is a formidable textbook at first glance with 666 pages of descriptive writing, over 450 detailed but clear diagrams, and over 70 tables summarising information delivered within the text. Its 28 pages of Appendices list the CD antigens with their current names and expression and function, antigen names with CD designation equivalents, a list of current cytokines and their receptors, and the time course of a typical immune response. There are 31 contributors to this book, the majority of whom are working currently in Boston, USA; Judith Allen is the one United Kingdom based author invited to discuss immunity to parasitic and fungal infections. The 27 chapters of the book are divided into two broad sections; the first 15 chapters describe the molecular biology of immune cells and the biochemical mechanisms associated with cell-to-cell interactions. The last 12 chapters then apply these scientific principles to infectious disease and the host innate and adaptive immune responses to each group of pathogens, and the principles of vaccination and development of vaccines. At the end of each chapter is a summary of its contents and a suggested reading list should the reader wish detailed clarification of the principles described within the text. Very few of the references are dated before 2001, making this book as up-to-date as any similar text in its field.