

liability, error reduction and future developments, before reviewing all current major autoanalysers available.

A useful feature throughout the CD is that certain slides considered to be essential knowledge are marked with red asterisks, as is the 'cut and paste' design which enables individual slides to be incorporated into customised lectures.

This series of lectures is a comprehensive and valuable learning tool that would be a useful addition for any transfusion department's training regime, and further editions promise to cover additional lectures on items such as 'transfusion reactions' and 'the red cell membrane'.

One point the authors are keen to point out is that the lectures on the CD-ROM should be used as an adjunct to other educational and teaching material, and not seen as a replacement. □

**B. Hill**

## Collins and Lyne's Microbiological Methods

C. H. Collins, P. Lyne, J. Grange, J. Falkinham (eds). London: Hodder Arnold (8th Edn), 2003: pp 480. ISBN 0340808969 (paperback). £45.

This book was first published over 40 years ago. Now in its eighth edition, it aims to provide a thorough and updated overview of methods in microbiology. The text is well written in a logical format and is presented well in a monochrome style. Figures and tables, mostly the latter, are provided for additional information and references are supplied where required.

As well as providing an introduction to areas such as health and safety, quality assurance and sterilisation methods, the book covers the methods required for handling and identifying all the common groups of bacteria. I do feel, however, that certain sections of the book fall short of their promise and, in some cases, are factually incorrect. For example, the chapter on automated methods does not cover the breadth of automation now available in microbiology and only three pages are devoted to molecular biology, while the chapter on identification methods does not include newer typing methods such as multilocus sequence typing (MLST), which was first described in 1998 and is now widely adopted in reference laboratories for typing some major bacterial pathogens.

Moreover, it states that gels used for pulsed-field gel electrophoresis (PFGE) and restriction fragment length polymorphism (RFLP) analysis can be scanned and made available to clinicians in a hospital a distant location. While this does not happen in practice, it is also incorrect in that such methods are often not reproducible. It is now widely accepted that nucleotide sequence-based methods provide better methodology for comparisons to be made worldwide as the data generated are truly digital.

Another major shortfall of the text is that, in many chapters, the references are out of date. It also over cites chapters from various editions of Topley and Wilson. While I am a big believer in retaining references of historical importance, updated references should be supplied where possible.

This said, the book will prove very useful as a standard text for undergraduates worldwide and will be used commonly, as the authors state, as a bench book. □

**S. C. Clarke**

## Modern Medical Microbiology: The Fundamentals

Stuart C. Clarke. London: Arnold, 2004: pp 239. ISBN 0-340-81044-0. £19.99.

Regular readers of *The Biomedical Scientist* will need no introduction to the name of Dr Stuart Clarke, as he has authored an extended series of articles covering a range of microbiological topics. Once upon a time I kept all my copies of *The Biomedical Scientist* but limited space has now changed the habit of a lifetime. Thus, it was a great pleasure to discover that Clarke's review articles from *The Biomedical Scientist* have been collated into a single volume.

The articles are not grouped in chronological order of original publication but into five sections. Part I covers contributions ranging from 'Health and Safety in the Laboratory' through 'Microbiology of Catheters' to 'Bioterrorism'. Parts II-V contain review papers dealing with bacteriology, virology, parasitology and mycology, respectively. These papers are not dedicated solely to detail of microbiological study in the laboratory, but deal with disease entities; hence, most articles have titles such as 'Botulism', 'The Common Cold', 'Malaria' or 'Candidiasis'.

All the articles are written in very clear English and are referenced in a conventional scientific manner. Consequently, they make excellent reading for those who need an authoritative overview of a topic for introductory or revision purposes. A lapsed microbiologist such as your reviewer found this compilation both stimulating and salutary in exposing the limited nature of one's knowledge. The appendix that lists relevant websites is also useful.

Every library that serves biomedical scientists should purchase a copy of this book immediately because I am not lending mine to anybody! □

**D. J. Rogers**

## Medical Microbiology

C. Mimms, H.M. Dockrell, R. V. Goering, I. Roitt, D. Wakelin, M. Zuckerman. London: Mosby (3rd Edn), 2003: pp 660. ISBN 0 7234 32597. £35.99.

Although now in its third edition, I have not had a copy of this book in my hands before. Its overall appearance is very impressive, as is the wealth of information within its cover. Such wealth does not come lightly, however, as the book weighs nearly 3 kg!

I have criticised many UK microbiology textbooks because of the paucity of colour in illustrations and page design. Our US colleagues produce much more attractive textbooks that are often no more expensive to buy. This book, however, has over 480 colour diagrams, figures and photographs, with touches of colour on the pages to distinguish different sections of the book.

So, it has colour, but what about the quality of the information provided? It is excellent for several reasons. The authors have rejected the traditional catalogue of organisms with listed characteristics and updated control measures. They have also spurned the simplistic 'microbe + host = disease' concept because most host-microbe contacts do not