Book Reviews

(EDITORIAL ASSISTANT, R. TULLY)


After systemic injection haematoporphyrin (HpD) is differentially retained in malignant tissue compared with the surrounding tissue. It can then be stimulated by light of appropriate wave-length, either to produce fluorescence for tumour detection and localization, or to give cytocidal products for tumour destruction. Dr. Dougherty and his colleagues at Roswell Park Memorial Hospital pioneered much of the basic and pre-clinical animal studies of HpD and this volume is the result of co-operation between Dr Dougherty and Japanese workers, first in testing the efficacy of HpD in a canine experimental model of bronchogenic squamous cancer and then in subsequent clinical trials in man, not only with bronchogenic cancer, but with gastroesophageal, bladder, head and neck, skin and gynaecological cancers as well. There is divided opinion in the United States and Britain about the place for this form of treatment of cancer, and this volume is the first textbook available to clinicians about this form of treatment which aroused interest and discussion. Thus it deserves to be widely read.

It is a slim volume of 117 pages divided into three sections: (1) the principles of the use of HpD; (2) the methods for using it; and (3) the clinical applications, and results. There are excellent coloured photographs in the third section.

P. Hugh-Jones


These two volumes in a series on current progress in cancer research provide a wide ranging review of recent research into brain tumours. The first volume considers the more basic aspects. Here the problems of differentiation, heterogeneity, immunohistology and blood flow are considered. These chapters provide good reviews of the field although they do tend to stress the authors‘ own work. There is great paucity of information on human tumours, and the relevance of some of the experimental systems studied, usually using carcinogens such as ethylnitrosourea as a carcinogen, are questionable. Studies on blood flow in a variety of experimental tumours have shown considerable regional variation which is, of course, of relevance to the administration of chemotherapy. Proton-emission tomography is clearly another way of studying not only blood flow, but tumour cell metabolism. An excellent review of this is provided.

In the second volume the clinical aspects are considered with a view to therapy. Stem cell assays and human brain tumour xenografts have not really provided the screening systems we require to predict sensitivity of individual tumours. We still await more subtle molecular approaches to this problem. Various types of chemotherapy, such as monoclonal antibodies coupled to drugs and other agents, are all discussed but mainly at a hypothetical level with almost no clinical findings. Immunotherapy has proven disappointing but well reviewed. New modalities of radiotherapy have not really brought about any successful improvement over the last few years. In view of this it is unlikely that hyperthermia will be the answer either.

Brain tumours are on the whole a depressing subject for the clinician. These two volumes, whilst containing the latest update on their biology and treatment, do not uplift the mood. Clearly, we must look for completely new approaches if we are to improve things for our patients.

K. Sikora

Other Books Received


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