bring together the contrasting methods used to give an insight into the different strategies used in the successes.

Events have rather overtaken this book. In particular one feels sympathy for the author of the chapter on Huntington’s disease, who dealt laughably the genetic work attempting to locate the Huntington’s disease gene, only to finish the chapter with a footnote describing the cloning of the gene. The identification of triplet repeat expansion in Huntington’s disease, which can now be identified by PCR assay without need for family studies, renders much of this chapter of historical rather than practical interest. It is unfortunate that this chapter couldn’t have been more substantially modified in the light of this discovery.

Michael Owen carefully reviews the molecular genetic advances in Alzheimer’s disease. This chapter has also however been overtaken by recent events, particularly with respect to the importance of apolipoprotein E as a marker of genetic susceptibility. Another chapter provides a long discussion of the possible involvement of aluminium and other factors in the aetiology of Alzheimer’s disease, which seems rather out of proportion to the importance that most workers in the field would attribute to these areas. It is, however, a meticulous chapter on the molecular biology of the transmissible dementias which omits entirely the importance of the codon 129 polymorphism, with respect to genetic susceptibility to prion diseases in humans. This chapter again suffers from the rapid advances that have been made since writing, in particular with respect to the remarkable animal modelling of these diseases using transgenic animals; it is a shame that none of this could have been included.

A chapter on the neurochemistry of schizophrenia reviews established neurochemical models and details some recent advances in this area; the problems of this sort of approach in deducing aetiological mechanisms are well reviewed.

Molecular genetics hold great hopes for teasing apart these undoubtedly multifactorial aetiologies of both schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, and the various approaches to this are reviewed in two chapters. It is important for the clinical reader unfamiliar with the arguments to understand why some diseases have proved so difficult as targets for positional cloning and in particular why so many false positives have been seen; I was disappointed that this opportunity was not clearly grasped. One chapter indeed recommends the strategy of finding large pedigrees with “only one source of illness” but does not mention the problem that with a common disease, with probably several incompletely penetrant susceptibility genes, the more you extend the family the more likely it is that more that one disease gene will be segregating in the extended pedigree, confusing clinical and linkage studies.

In conclusion, while this book deals with a subject of immense importance to practising neurologists and psychiatrists, I hesitate in recommending it to a clinical readership. Those seeking an introduction to the genetics involved in a molecular approach to neuropsychiatric disease are better served elsewhere; those seeking a review of the state of the field I think find it an unbalanced and, although this is largely inevitable, somewhat out of date coverage.

JOHN COLLINGE

NOTICE

Readers may be interested in


Ottorino Rossi Award Conference. International Workshop on Eye Movement. Edited by ALBERTO VERZINO and DANIELA ZAMBARBERI. (Pp 337.) Published by Fondazione Institute of Neurology, Pavia 1994.


