gestational trophoblastic neoplasia should read and refer to.

G.M. Stirrat

*Molecular Biology and Human Disease.* Eds. A. MacLeod and K. Sikora. Blackwell Scientific – 1984, £10.80, xi + 271 pages, ISBN 0 632 01167 X.

This very readable, fairly brief, book is aimed at medical and science students as well as practising physicians and deserves to find a receptive audience among them. It is divided into two sections, one on the basic technology and the other on the application of this technology to clinical medicine.

The techniques discussed in the first section are wide ranging, from DNA cloning and sequencing to cell sorting and the production of monoclonal antibodies. All these chapters are well written and concise, my only reservation being that Chapter 5 on the cytoskeleton seems out of place. The application section starts with two excellent chapters, one on thalassaemias, the other on prenatal diagnosis. These two chapters are the most extensive in the application section, reflecting the fact that molecular biology has had a significant impact in these areas. The inclusion of some of the other chapters seems a little premature in that the impact of molecular techniques is yet to be felt.

However, I thoroughly recommend this book to both those who want a brief well written introduction to the techniques of modern molecular biology and to those who require a survey of the ways in which molecular biology has aided the understanding and treatment of human disease.

M. Mackett

*Porphyrins in Tumor Phototherapy.* Eds. A. Andreoni and R. Cubeddu. Plenum – 1984, £67.50, xii + 465 pages.

Treatment of malignant tumours with light following sensitisation with various substances, in particular certain porphyrin derivatives, is an approach to cancer therapy which is currently receiving considerable attention. The technique is known as photodynamic therapy or photoradiation therapy. The sensitising agent, the best known of which is haematoporphyrin derivative (HpD), is administered systematically and is retained selectively in malignant tumours. Subsequent light exposure causes selective tissue necrosis in areas of high sensitiser concentration, through the mechanism of singlet oxygen formation. However, the detailed processes involved are complex and poorly understood. This book consists of 51 papers on all aspects of the subject which were presented at a Congress in Milan in May 1983. Many authors are leading authorities in the field. Most papers are good, a few are outstanding. The book is divided into five chapters: physics and chemistry of relevant porphyrins, interactions of porphyrins and light with individual cells, studies on animal tumours, instrumentation and dosimetry, and clinical applications. The spectrum of scientific fields covered is very wide – physics, chemistry, biochemistry, photobiology and experimental and clinical pathology. Most are covered well in their own right, although the book lacks any attempt to give an overview on how they all fit together. In particular, the clinical studies are largely anecdotal and do not appear to make the best use of the quantitative results available from the experimental work, not to compare photodynamic therapy with alternative treatment modalities. Even so, the case for treatment of multiple small superficial tumours of the bladder is put well, and this could become of value clinically in the not too distant future.

This is an excellent tome for the specialist in the field (apart from the absence of several important pages due to printing errors.) However, there are too many trees for those just wishing to look at the wood.

S.G. Bown

*Human Alkaline Phosphatases – Progress in Clinical and Biological Research.* Vol. 166. Eds. T. Stigbrand and W.H. Fishman. A.R. Lisse – 1984, £37.00, xvii + 361 pages, ISBN 0 8451 5016 2.

This book consists of 28 papers, most of which were originally given at a satellite symposium held in connection with the annual meeting of the International Society of Oncodevelopmental Biology and Medicine in Sweden during September, 1983. Given this background, it is not surprising that the subject matter is largely slanted towards oncodevelopmental aspects and readers with a general interest who are seeking a comprehensive account of recent developments in alkaline phosphatase research are likely to be disappointed with the narrow treatment of the subject. Much of the text is concerned specifically with placental-type alkaline phosphatase, with only an occasional paper referring to other isoenzymes.

A more appropriate title would have attracted the attention of those for whom the book is most relevant: workers interested in the alkaline phosphatases as oncodevelopmental proteins. There are contributions from many of the leading authorities in the field and biochemical topics are