

In summary, this book will be important reading to anyone interested in germ cell function. However I hope it achieves a wider readership than those already in the field as it provides an insight

into some fascinating problems of interest to all biologists.

Keith Dudley

Biology of Normal Proliferating Cells In Vitro: Relevance for In Vivo Aging

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By A. Macieira-Coelho

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During the course of the last decade there has been a marked increase in public awareness of ageing, primarily induced by growing numbers of old people in the community. This has led to the expectation that medical scientists should, in some generally unspecified manner, 'do something' about ageing and, more specifically, age-related diseases. While it would appear churlish to deny the general public the fulfilment of their wishes in this matter, it must be noted that as yet our knowledge of ageing effectively is minimal. Hence there is no sound scientific rationale on which therapeutic intervention in diseases of ageing can be based. The present volume represents an attempt to summarize experimental evidence on ageing gained from cell culture techniques, the discipline of cytogerontology.

There is a brief but useful introductory discussion on justification for the employment of cell culture systems in the study of ageing. The book then covers a number of subject areas central to the application of such systems to gerontological research. These include the relationship between the behaviour of cells in culture and pathophysiology of the donor individuals, mechanisms held to be responsible for the differen-

tial growth potential of somatic cells with ageing in vitro, dynamics of the loss of proliferative potential during cell senescence, and parameters of the cell cycle during age-dependent growth decline. Finally, the author considers the nature of individual cells in culture and how factors such as the anatomical site of the explant and ante- or postnatal status of the donor may influence the interpretation of results.

By current norms in gerontology the book is somewhat unusual, being the product of a single author. This has resulted in a more coherent and critical approach to the subject than often is the case with multi-authored volumes. Occasionally the text is somewhat stilted, and there are a number of printer's errors and examples of references cited but missing from the list of references. However these are minor quibbles. The overall quality of production is good, with generous and appropriate use of figures and tables. The end product is a useful, balanced survey of cytogerontology which can be strongly recommended as a reference source both to gerontologists and those wishing to embark on a career in the subject.

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