

Book Review

Hepatitis C Virus: From Laboratory to Clinic. Mark A. Feitelson. Cambridge University Press, 2002. Pp. 256. £32.95.

According to the author of this book, twenty thousand papers had been published about hepatitis C and its virus by the close of the year 2000, a daunting but not implausible statistic. The purpose of this book is to save students the task of reading them all and, by and large, it achieves that aim. The diligent reader of this book will come away with a thorough grounding in the virology and immunopathology of hepatitis C, know what the major sources of further information are, and understand why this infection is at once enigmatic, insidiously progressive, difficult to treat and hard to immunize against.

The book is intelligently laid out with a helpful preface and four parts dedicated to basics, recent advances, experimentation and techniques. Topics such as genotypes and quasi-species, experimental HCV replication *in vitro*, the search for a small animal model, and vaccine development are well covered, and the book is open minded and speculative, while still managing to be accurate and

informative. It is made clear what is known and what is not known about HCV.

The claim made by the title of the book to span the divide between laboratory and clinic is one not quite achieved at the practical level. The reviewer found only single sentences dealing with the frequently asked questions about transmission of HCV from mother to infant and the advisability of breastfeeding. No mention is made of what is probably the main determinant of transmission by these routes, namely co-infection with HIV, nor of the convenient (*Ortho*) assay for HCV antigen that has been available for several years and might in future be substituted for the cost-inefficient HCV RNA amplification assays currently being used by many transfusion services to screen blood donors. Nevertheless, this book is an excellent introduction to HCV studies, competitively priced, up to date for the moment and (one hopes) set to go into further editions which will maintain its topicality and allow any omissions to be repaired. Thoroughly recommended!

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