

BOOK REVIEW

Dacie and Lewis Practical Haematology, Ninth Edition

EDITED BY S. M. LEWIS, B. J. BAIN, I. BATES

London: Churchill Livingstone; 2001: 633 pages

Publication of the ninth edition of *Dacie and Lewis Practical Haematology* marks the retirement of Sir John Dacie and 50 years of continuous publication of one of the best known laboratory hematology texts. Two new coeditors, Drs. B. J. Bain and I. Bates, have joined Dr. S. M. Lewis to revise and expand the volume to incorporate new laboratory methods. Another 16 well-known scientists have contributed chapters, including a chapter on molecular techniques valuable in hematological diagnosis.

Practical Haematology has been considered a must reference text for any hematology laboratory. It serves as a clearly written, practical guide to the most common laboratory tests used in the diagnosis of disorders of the hematopoietic and hemostatic systems. As is clear from its popularity over the years, the value of the text to hematology laboratories goes without question. Individual chapters deal with basic blood-counting techniques, reference values, blood and marrow morphology, laboratory methods used in the diagnosis of specific blood disorders, blood bank methodology, and hemostasis testing. Each chapter has been revised to take into account new developments, eliminating outdated tests and incorporating newer methods. The 2001 revision represents a major challenge given the explosion of new technologies, especially those involving automated cytometry and molecular diagnostic methods.

A question must arise as to just who is the audience for *Practical Haematology*. The routine or hospital hematology laboratory is now but one of several resources needed to support the diagnosis and management of hematological disease. Methodologies such as flow cytometry and molecular diagnostics rely on a new and highly complex knowledge base and laboratory expertise not readily served by a single laboratory or, for that matter, a single comprehensive laboratory guide. Space restrictions have not allowed sufficient detail to

make the text a “complete guide” to performing these tests or interpreting the results. *Practical Haematology* does, however, provide an excellent overview of the newer molecular diagnostic and cytometric techniques and their application to hematology diagnosis.

Areas less well served by *Practical Haematology* include the quantity and quality of color plates depicting normal and abnormal red cell and marrow morphology findings, the growing number of genetic markers in the classification of the leukemias and lymphomas, the errors inherent in testing as well as the limits of test result interpretation, and the specific guidelines for testing in the evaluation of blood disorders. The latter is especially important in an era of cost containment, in which laboratories cannot afford to perform a test unless it is clearly indicated. The chapter on the approach to the diagnosis of blood diseases is much too abbreviated to act as a guide to the interpretation of test results. This material would be better incorporated in the earlier chapters dealing with individual disorders and expanded to recognize diagnostic algorithms recommended in other popular hematology texts.

Advances in molecular biology and scientific instrumentation have had a major impact on the diagnosis of hematological disorders and the testing services that need to be provided by the “hematology laboratory.” The ninth edition of *Practical Haematology* does a laudable job in trying to cover this dramatic expansion. However, its ability to serve as a “stand-alone” guide for laboratory hematology has been overwhelmed by advances in molecular biology and instrumentation.

Reviewed by
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