

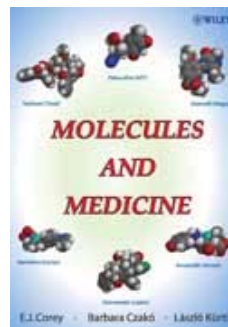
Education

Molecules and medicine

John Mann

New Jersey: Wiley 2007 | Pp254 | £26.50 | ISBN0 470 22749 4

Reviewed by John Mann



There is a common misconception that GPs make their patients better. In fact most patients will recover from illnesses courtesy of their immune systems, but if drugs are needed then you could say that chemists make people better.

Whether it is amoxicillin or vancomycin for bacterial infections, acyclovir (Zovirax) for herpes, Becotide for asthma, or tamoxifen (Novaldex) for breast cancer, these are all molecules made by chemists and they are all medicines. These and some 100 other fascinating molecules are the subjects of this book.

The target readership is broad and while the book will be warmly welcomed by chemists and pharmacists, who will value the concise but comprehensive coverage for each drug, it is also directed at the 'educated lay person'. To help the general reader to appreciate the beautiful, full-colour structures in the book, there is a 30-page introduction to structural chemistry. This is handled sympathetically and should work for most people.

The choice of drugs is superb with readily recognised ones such as Claritin, Viagra, Lipitor, Prozac, and Zantac juxtaposed with less well known ones like the antibiotic linezolid, the anticancer drug bleomycin, the anti-parasitic agent ivermectin, and the cognition enhancer donepezil. Each section begins with an introduction to the biological system targeted by the classes of drug, *eg* the immune system, viruses, cancer, the brain and neurotransmission, drug resistance *etc*. At the end of each section there is a comprehensive and contemporary reference section, and the glossary and index are also excellent.

This is a book to sample rather than read from cover to cover, and no matter what one's prior level of knowledge, there is something of interest on every page. This is a treasure trove of information about molecules as medicines.