

Genetic Diversity among Jews: Diseases and Markers at the DNA Level. Edited by B. BONNE-TAMIR and A. ADAM. Oxford University Press. 1992. 460 pages. £50.00. Hardback. ISBN 0 19 506817 3.

In 1977 Richard Goodman and Arno Motulsky organized a conference on genetic diseases amongst Ashkenazi Jews, the first academic recognition of a subject which became of growing interest in medical circles after the foundation of the State of Israel. Goodman subsequently published a monograph *Genetic Disorders among the Jewish People* (1979), and was a key figure in stimulating interest in the subject of comparative human genetics. This volume, which focuses on the impact of molecular techniques on genetic variation in Jews, is appropriately dedicated to the memory of Goodman, who died in 1989 at the early age of 57.

Part I of the book, by Sergio Della-Pergola, describes demographic trends in world Jewry over the last hundred years, including migrations and changing population sizes. It is an essential introduction to Part II, which collates and reviews genetic polymorphisms, including those in mitochondrial DNA. However, the meat of the book, and nearly three-quarters of its length, is in the sections on Mendelian and non-

Mendelian diseases and the differences in prevalences within Jewish and between Jewish and non-Jewish populations. The substance of the material is directed towards the practising clinical geneticist.

Most people have heard of Tay-Sachs disease, the uniquely unpleasant neurodegenerative disorder that only really afflicts Ashkenazi Jews. It has its own charitable society and has been the subject of successful programmes of prenatal screening in a number of developed countries. Fewer will have heard of Niemann-Pick, Gaucher or Canavan disease, all of which tend to segregate amongst the Ashkenazim, or of Laron-type dwarfism or familial Mediterranean fever, found predominantly among the non-Ashkenazim. In all of these and many others, the clinical symptoms, molecular genetics and population distributions are carefully described.

Genetic Diversity among Jews is a valuable addendum to the shelves of the comprehensive medical genetics library. It is beautifully produced, lovingly edited and, for its type, modestly priced. Specialist and non-specialist could spend many happy hours browsing through the wealth of fascinating detail.

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