

Book review:

Henk-Jan Schurmann, Gilles Feultren, Jean-Francois Bach (edts):

Modern Immunosuppressives.

Birkhäuser, Basel, 2001, ISBN 3-7643-5981-1, 168,00 sFr

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This textbook is a part of the series Milestones in Drug Therapy, edited by Michael J Parnham, Jacques Bruinvels, and presents a detailed survey on our understanding and therapeutic use of the immune system and host response. Without immunosuppression the benefits of any organ transplant are not available, and, in addition, this technique is of great significance in treatment of several so-called "idiopathic" chronic diseases. The technique of suppression of the immune systems has been developed during the last two decades. Of specific importance was the introduction of cyclosporin in 1980 – 1985 which immediately increased the frequency of organ transplants in the Western hemisphere. This first step was followed by the development of specific antibodies (for example against OKT3, CD52, CD25, or TNF-?), and new substances such as tacrolimus, leflunomide, or sirolimus. In 1990 – 1996 the second boost in clinical immunosuppression was born associated with a better handling of side effects of this therapy, and to take into account the interactions between different compartments of the immune system. In relation to the historical development the book is divided into four parts, namely chapters on immunosuppressive drugs, biologicals, new avenues in immunosuppression, and perspectives. The compartment on immunosuppressive drugs comprises four chapters, which include cyclosporine, tarolimus, macrocyclic tasctones, and mycophenolate mofetil. The chemical composition, the application, clinical features, and potential side effects of these substances are well described. Several figures and tables provide the reader with useful and easy-to understand information. The theme biologicals describes the targeting of the IL-2 receptor with antibodies, and the basics of anti-T-cell antibodies. New avenues and perspectives inform about tolerance induction, synergy effects of different therapeutic approaches, and – of course – about the trials of gene therapy. In summary, this textbook is very useful to get informed about the development and the outlook of an important therapeutic strategy, the suppression of our immune system.

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