
Connective tissues perhaps received less than their fair share of chemical study until recently. The introduction of new histochemical techniques, particularly those for mucosubstances, is likely, however, to stimulate much further research, both histochemical and biochemical, and pathologists and clinicians should have to hand some guide to what is already known of connective tissue chemistry. It is this sort of background which this book sets out to outline. The authors discuss the chemistry first of connective tissue fibres, then of ground substance and metabolism, in a way which can be understood by anyone with only a limited chemical knowledge. They then discuss the structure of various normal specialized connective tissues, particularly synovia, in some detail. There is then a description of some aspects of the chemistry and pathology of repair, formation of new tissues and ageing in these tissues, which perhaps serves to emphasize how many gaps there are in our knowledge of the chemistry of these processes. Finally some specific processes, including amyloid and rheumatoid arthritis, are discussed in chemical and pathological terms.

There are minor criticisms. Although the book (and I quote) is “authored” in America the references are given without the title of the paper, an omission which I personally find irritating. One would have liked to have had more discussion of parallel histochemical findings and their correlation (or lack of it) with the biochemical ones. But, as the authors point out, this is a primer not a textbook, and much valuable material is contained in it; it will undoubtedly be of value to biochemists, histochemists, pathologists, and clinicians, and it makes interesting reading.

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Usually a reviewer of such Proceedings as these has been influenced by being an active participant of the Conference. However, I was unable to be present and therefore the following remarks are based upon this permanent and edited record with its obvious loss of nuance and of atmosphere.

Dr. J. Goslings (Leiden), in his welcoming address, set the stage by asking whether this revival of another empirical modality was due to changes in technique to give better results or, perhaps, to better understanding of the aetiology and pathogenesis of rheumatoid disease. He also requested that the participants should define “early” in exact terms of disease duration or severity. In general, it is fair to say that many of these important questions were not answered. However, the symposium was a success because it defined the problem effectively and gave a better vocabulary for those engaged in applying this technique and in its assessment.

Prof. J. M. F. Landsmeer (Leiden) demonstrated anatomically how difficult a total, or even subtotal, synovectomy must be because of the involved linings of so many recesses and bursae. His work indicated how imperative it is to develop some quantitative method to measure the amount of diseased synovium which can be, and should be, removed by proper technique—especially if any trial is to be standardized.

A critical correlation of the physiological aspects of the disease with the actual timing of synovectomy