

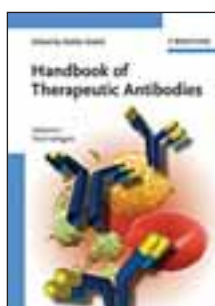
New publications about immunology, microbiology and popular philosophy

Sapid Science

A highly anticipated compendium emerges as the new reference point for therapeutic antibodies.

An enjoyable approach to clinical microbiology goes into its 4th edition.

An author's thought experiment scares readers.



It is hard to imagine modern medical science without therapeutic antibodies – just consider the benefits of cancer combating drugs like Herceptin and Avastin. Stefan Duebel, a professor of biotechnology from the Technical University Braunschweig, has had a decade's experience with these laboratory-engineered molecules. He is an expert in recombinant antibody phage display technology and holds 17 patents. As the editor of the *Handbook of Therapeutic Antibodies*, Duebel gathered nearly 100 experts and researchers from academia, industry, and regulating bodies such as the FDA. The result, as claimed by the publishing house Wiley-VCH, is 'the most comprehensive reference source for the development, production and therapeutic application of antibodies'.

This is validated by the sheer size of the three-volume tome. There is a plethora of useful information: established technologies and clinical applications as well as emerging technologies, new therapeutic concepts, masses of clinical studies data, and information about each currently approved type of antibody. It is a 'must-have' resource for every scientist dealing with these amazing molecules – even though the prize is less than amazing. -wk-

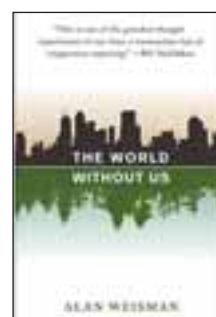
Stefan Duebel (ed.): *Handbook of Therapeutic Antibodies* (3 volumes). Wiley-VCH, 2007. 1228 pages, €499.00.



It's a pleasant surprise when a reputable scientist descends from his ivory tower and engages in less important business. Mark Gladwin, the chief of the Vascular Medicine Branch at NIH's National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, is such a scientist. Gladwin is an international expert in sickle cell disease and pulmonary hypertension and he has written a very enjoyable approach to clinical microbiology, addressed to young medical students studying for exams.

Clinical Microbiology made ridiculously simple was first released in 1995 and is filled with humour and illustrations. Gladwin and his co-author William Trattler (an eye surgeon), provide the necessary information on clinically important microbes such as bacteria, fungi, viruses, and parasites. The student learns to differentiate between these little critters, which diseases they cause, what infected patients look like and which drugs medics use best to battle them. A variety of cartoons, graphs, and tables make the vast wealth of information easily accessible and a valuable tool for exam preparation. In addition, each chapter has a chart summarizing its contents. Possibly of most value are the funny mnemonics never found in a 'serious' textbook. The new 4th edition of this classic is still a worthwhile read. -wk-

Mark Gladwin & Bill Trattler: *Clinical Microbiology made ridiculously simple*, Edition 4. B&T, 2007. 393 pages, €23.95.



The earth depopulated overnight is a popular subject of science fiction stories and films such as '28 Days Later' or 'Quiet Earth', which have found widespread appeal. In his new book, *The World Without Us*, Alan Weisman from the University of Arizona acts out a similar thought experiment: how long would it take for all traces of human civilization to vanish? Weisman is not a natural scientist. This being the case, he talked with scientists of all kinds: engineers, atmospheric scientists, zoologists, oil refiners, marine biologists, and paleontologists.

The results are creepy. Only days after mankind's disappearance, the ground underneath waterfront cities like New York would overflow, the soil would soften, and the seemingly indestructible skyscrapers would soon start to crumble. Most buildings wouldn't survive significantly longer, as animations on Weisman's website show. The longest lasting relics of human genius could be TV talk shows (in the form of radio waves) and plastic material such as Barbie doll parts and car bumpers. Conversely, areas freed from mankind will quickly reconstitute themselves (as occurred around Chernobyl, where wildlife returned soon after the 1986 nuclear disaster). The world without us could be more beautiful. -wk-

Alan Weisman: *The World Without Us*. Thomas Dunne Books, 2007. 336 pages, €18.45.