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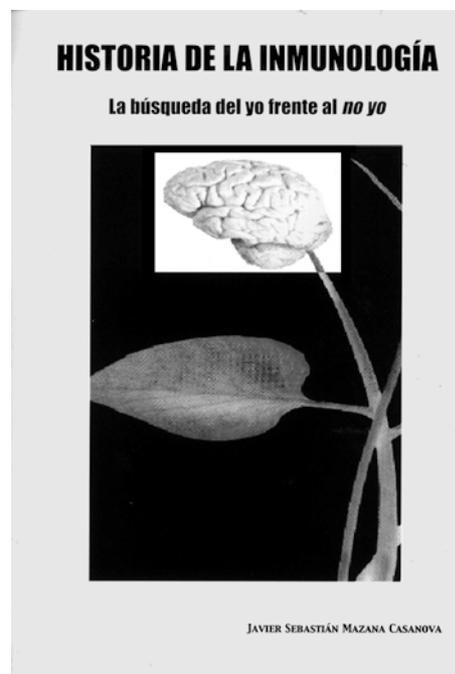
Javier Sebastián Mazana Casanova: Historia de la inmunología

Río Henares Producción Gráficas, S.L., 2002, 275 pp. (ISBN 84-95741-13X)

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The history of medicine and other related sciences with direct clinical applications offers a panoramic view of the goals achieved in the biomedical sciences from their beginnings. Illusions, uncertainty, great expectations, and disappointments have usually accompanied the development and history of those sciences. Nevertheless, the control of many diseases is evidence of the achievements of several clinical and biological fields. Along with the discoveries that have made progress in the control of human and animal diseases possible, researchers have called attention to the need for behavioral changes, both by individuals and by public health institutions, to allow these benefits to be effective. Resistance to antibiotics and other drugs, mutations, and the re-appearance of previously controlled diseases are occurring with increasing frequency, and in many cases are directly related to human behavior. These events point to the need to question individual as well as collective attitudes. It has been too expensive to reach the current standard of public-health, and to squander the huge efforts made and the many decades of work would be disastrous. On the other hand, many developing countries and economically deprived geographical areas cannot benefit from the scientific advancements that in developed countries are taken for granted.

The biography of a science is frequently as fascinating as any work of fiction. Life, death, love, hate, envies, gratitude, disappointment, illusion, and the range of emotions and attitudes that come into play have the same effects on real-life persons as they do on the characters in a novel. And while some of these persons have become famous, others have mostly remained anonymous. Nevertheless, each has contributed to the high levels of achievement attained in a wide range of scientific fields including immunology, the subject of this book. Its author, J.S. Mazana, reviews the different periods and players in what sometimes have been trag-



edies and other times adventures. Immunology and microbiology, being closely related disciplines, have a common history, mainly in basic research. The work of the immunologists Frank Macfarlane Burnet and Peter Medawar on the basis of immunological rejection led to the development of the scientific approach and technological equipment needed to transplant organs and to the surgical practices that have resulted in the current level of success. However, the insights and experiments of the scientific forebears of Macfarlane Burnet and Medawar provided the basis for their work and for the science of immunology itself. These predecessors include Jenner, Pasteur, Ferrán, Ehrlich, and, before them, Mary W. Montagu and her work on immunization against smallpox.

Beginning with Jenner's smallpox vaccine and continuing with the controversial cholera vaccine

developed by Ferrán, the author of the *History of Immunology* describes the facts and discoveries that comprise the long road of immunology as well as the technological advances that have promoted its success. Anecdotes, critical comments, and biographic sketches of the main characters and of the epoques during which they lived are included. All of these features contribute to an integrated review of this multidisciplinary subject. The book also includes a list of 860 references, which

will be of great value to those interested in the modern history of the life sciences. It lacks, however, an alphabetical index, which would have been very useful to find specific names and facts without having to search through the dense content of its pages. As a result, the utility of the *History of Immunology* as a reference book is limited. Nonetheless, the book is easy to read and understand and can thus be considered a science book of general interest.