Book Reviews

High Altitude: An Exploration of Human Adaptation

Thomas F. Hornbein and Robert B. Schoene, eds.

New York, NY: Marcel Dekker Inc, 2001

US \$235.00, 982 pages, hardcover

High Altitude: An Exploration of Human Adaptation is a considerable achievement in organization and tenacity by the editors to critically amass the comprehensive scientific detail that earns a unique place among the several high-altitude texts now available. The volume is a compendium of 25 chapters authored by 45 scholars active in the study of high-altitude life sciences. The acute response, adaptation, and, in some cases, maladaptation of the human body to high altitude are reported through the environmental range from 2000 m, as oxygen in the air begins to rarify, to 8900 m, where the earth's tallest land mountains peak.

The remarkable attention to important detail in *High Altitude: An Exploration of Human Adaptation* is a result of editorial guidance that encouraged the many authors to go beyond just *what* is happening and to report the *how*. The science of the times has much to dictate in our understanding and reporting of a subject; thus, current directions in biomedical science have as much of an imprint on this book as on any other up-to-date scientific publication. A major limitation of the book, however, is the inconsistency between chapters in the use of figures and graphics to efficiently present the information.

This is undoubtedly an academic science text. For the scientist from the many diverse fields that intersect with high-altitude physiology and medicine, there is no available substitute for this volume, given the fine level of critical detail and depth. For a scientifically curious clinician with a deep interest in altitude medicine, this book makes available the latest information on the science and evidence behind current understanding.

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