
Book Reviews

Clinical Tuberculosis, 2nd edn. Ed. P. D. O. Davies. Chapman & Hall, 1998. Pp. 711 + 112 (approx.) illus. £99.

Of the infectious diseases, tuberculosis remains the number one cause of adult mortality in the world and it is estimated that 8 million new cases occur each year. This book provides a critique of this major public health problem that is rather more extensive than might be anticipated from its title as epidemiological, economic and historical perspectives receive comprehensive review alongside current issues in diagnosis, pathology and treatment. The 42 chapters, each written by experts in the field, are clustered into 10 sections to include Laboratory Diagnosis, Pathology, Clinical, Treatment, Prevention, Control and Related Disease. A section on 'Disease in Specific Groups' includes review of the interaction with HIV in both industrialized countries and the developing world as well as issues of migration and poverty. Eleven chapters are contained in a section devoted to addressing problems specific to those less developed regions of the world where the burden of disease is highest. The subject matter is clearly presented and well referenced with some chapters concluding with list of key 'learning points'. However, with a volume of this size and scope access could perhaps have been improved by the provision of brief summaries of the topics covered by each of the chapters. This minor criticism apart the second edition of *Clinical Tuberculosis* is an informative and comprehensive work and will prove a valuable text for those interested in tuberculosis control whether from a clinical, public health or epidemiological background.

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AIDS Therapy. Ed. R. Dolin, H. Masur, M. S. Saag. Churchill Livingstone, 1999. ISBN 0-443-07592-1. Pp. 864. £55.

The speed with which therapy for HIV and related infections advances makes it difficult even for specialists to keep up; there are currently 15 anti-retroviral drugs licensed for the treatment of HIV infection, most of them licensed in the past 3 years. A book which provided a comprehensive and up-to-date account of the therapy of HIV and related infections would therefore be most welcome.

The aim of this book is to provide such an account in a way which is practical and easy for clinicians to use. A chapter is devoted to each antiviral drug, and one to immune based and alternative therapies; this is followed by a section on managing anti-retroviral therapies, which covers such difficult issues as when to start treatment, and what to do when it fails. The next 300 pages are devoted to the diagnosis, therapy and prevention of opportunistic processes (infectious and malignant). This is followed by a section on the approach to specific syndromes, including clinical algorithms of varying levels of complexity, and a final section on drug administration and interactions, both of which will be particularly useful to busy clinicians. The final section includes a list of current HIV-related internet resources.

This is an American book (only 4 of 87 chapter authors are from outside the USA), and the emphasis is inevitably American; it will not be much use to doctors working in developing countries, except to show them a 'gold standard' that they might aspire to if they had unlimited resources. It is extremely well referenced, and those who may not have access to the many recent papers cited at the end of each chapter may be able to find more information from the internet. The biggest problem facing editors of large multi-author textbooks is to make sure that they are up to date; indeed it has been suggested in reputable journals that textbooks are inevitably out of date, and hence bad for the health of patients. The editors of this book have done a remarkable job in ensuring that it is up to date; it would be useful to know what inducements and threats they were able to offer to make sure that the many authors met their deadlines. Inevitably, given the format, there is some overlap, but this is an extremely useful reference book which I intend to keep handy in my outpatient clinic.

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