

based on the number of people with these infections it is entirely appropriate to devote a significant portion of the text to discussing mycobacterial infections.

This book will be extremely useful for a variety of readers. As noted above, it should not be used for undergraduate students with a limited knowledge of immunology unless they are also provided with an introductory textbook. Many other readers will find this very helpful, including medical students, graduate students in the biological sciences, infectious disease physicians, and researchers planning to expand their scientific horizons into the infectious disease arena. Portions of this book will become mandatory reading in my own laboratory.

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Manson's tropical diseases

Gordon C Cook and Alimuddin I Zumla (Eds.), 21st ed.; W.B. Saunders, London, 2003, 1864 pages with 1007 illustrations, hardback, ISBN 0702026409, £122, \$179

In his preface to the first edition to this famous book, published in 1898, Patrick Manson wrote, 'A manual on the diseases of warmer climates, of handy size, and yet giving adequate information, has long been a want'. More than a hundred years and twenty editions later, what is often described as the bible of tropical medicine has come a long way, and indeed as the current editors point out, this new edition completes a fundamental change in direction for the book. What started out as a treatise on a limited number of parasitic infections has become a traditional multi-author textbook whose aim is to cover 'medicine in the tropics'. As we shall see, therein lays the dilemma of all such large books: where to draw the line, what should be in and what should be out.

The book is structured into a number of sections. The first, dealing with underlying factors in tropical medicine, provides excellent overviews of

topics such as primary care and disease prevention and control, traditional medicine, genetics as it applies to tropical medicine and some broader topics such as economics and ethics in the tropics. There then follows a series of system-oriented chapters dealing with, for example, respiratory problems or cardiovascular disease in the tropics. There is a section on environmental and genetic disorders (such as nutrition or high altitude disease) and the remainder of the book is then largely devoted to systematic accounts of viruses, rickettsia, bacteria, fungi and parasitic infections. The last 200 pages are made up of appendices which are largely to do with laboratory aspects of diagnosis of tropical infections, as well as a systematic account of the lifecycle and distinguishing characteristics of most of the important parasites.

Books of this kind are of course intended as a reference guide; one expects to dip into them from time to time to refresh one's memory, check for things long forgotten or never known, or sometimes for the pleasure of browsing in a fascinating field of medicine. That is how I approached this review and, not surprisingly, found something of a curate's egg. I turned first to the section on skin disease since this is probably one of the commonest areas that the non-specialist in tropical medicine is likely to come across. Using as a guide a series of patients I have seen recently, I was rewarded with a clear and helpful account of cutaneous larva migrans but was disappointed that erythema multiforme did not even appear in the index. I was curious as to why porphyria should be chosen to be included when cutaneous vasculitis was absent (although there is a reference to it in the section on trypanosomiasis). Perhaps the most disappointing aspect of the chapter, and indeed the whole book, is that although liberally illustrated these are all black and white pictures and I am not sure that this would now be regarded as the state-of-the-art in medical textbook publishing, particularly given that tropical medicine lends itself so well to colour photographs. That said there are some small sections of colour photos scattered in the book and quality of the black and white pictures is generally good.

Several of the other chapters I consulted were extremely strong; the chapter on meningitis gave me all I needed and when I consulted the book about a patient with clonorchiasis I easily obtained the information I needed.

Most chapters are well referenced and generally have citations up to and including 2001, a real achievement for a text book of this size. The emphasis is on diagnosis and management rather than pathogenesis, and the book is clearly designed pri-

marily for the practitioner. I was pleased to see that, where appropriate, specific drug dosages were given; it is so often frustrating to be told that the treatment of a given disease is antimicrobial x but to be given no indication of how much or how often.

Manson's is undoubtedly a valuable textbook of tropical diseases but it is not the only source of this kind of information and practitioners will have to judge for themselves whether it fulfils their needs. Much of the information it contains can equally be found in other large textbooks of microbiology or infectious diseases. Up-to-date information on disease outbreaks or prophylaxis for travellers to tropical areas can now be found on websites such as ProMED or that run by the Centers for Disease Control, as well as many others. There are a number of

excellent colour atlases with first class photographs of tropical diseases. Manson brings all of this under one roof but inevitably suffers slightly in the process. If you have only one source of reference on tropical diseases you could do a great deal worse than Manson's.

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