BOOK REVIEW

A Practical Guide to Clinical Bacteriology

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This book, like its companion volume, 'A Practical Guide to Clinical Virology', is intended for medical graduates, undergraduates in medicine and biology, nurses, technicians and health professionals. The wide range of background knowledge among these diverse groups makes it extremely difficult to produce a slim volume which is equally intelligible to all. The authors do not seem to have been particularly successful in this task and it is not clear for which group the book would be best suited.

Some treatments are simplistic, e.g. "The various clusters of organisms are given names according to a set of rules (nomenclature) and these names can be seen as a short code standing for a large set of properties on each occasion. This allows people to communicate without reiterating the list of properties on each occasion." With other treatment, e.g. "It is a complex process involving local accumulation of neutrophils, release of vasoactive peptides, prostaglandins (PGE₁ and PGF_{2a}), leukotrienes and 5-hydroxytryptamine, and consequent vasodilation and oedema." a significant amount of background knowledge is expected. This type of imbalance is seen throughout the book.

There are general introductions, some of which lack a degree of detail. Bacterial Classification is an overview; Ecology and Spread of Bacteria deals with sources of infecting bacteria, possible transmission routes and a general discussion of microbes

and diseases. Pathogenesis of Bacterial Infections gives brief coverage of local inflammation, septic shock, granuloma information, toxins and host defences whilst Laboratory Diagnosis introduces the reader to specimen collection, simple ideas on diagnostic methods and serology. Antimicrobial Agents gives a fairly superficial treatment of the principles involved, classification of antibiotics and of a selection of individual anti-bacterial agents. Sterilisation and Disinfection discusses the principles involved and Immunisation against Bacterial Infections introduces both passive and active immunisation and immunisation schedules. After a brief discourse on Clinical Syndromes (covered on a systems basis), general of bacteria are considered individually under the sub-headings of Transmission, Clinical Features, Complications, Therapy and Prophylaxis and Laboratory Diagnosis. Even though some required detail is lacking, these sections are useful, but as a "Practical Guide", the coverage of what is required for 'Laboratory Diagnosis' is somewhat incomplete and would require supplementation from alternative sources.

Nevertheless, there are many useful tables in the book which could be used for quick reference particularly by someone already conversant with Bacteriology. Its size, reasonable price and 'readability' suggest that it could appeal to newly qualified medical professionals, and the cartoons could give them light relief.

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