BOOK REVIEWS


Infectious diarrhoea continues to be a vitally important topic not only as an important cause of morbidity and mortality in infants and young children especially in the developing world, but also because it affects people of any age when travelling abroad. Furthermore, infectious diarrhoea is an important cause of disability among immunocompromised subjects. All these topics are considered by the international contributors to this important and valuable book.

The book provides an important and up to date review of infectious disease of interest to physicians and paediatricians concerned with the treatment of patients with infectious diarrhoea. This book gives an account of this topic as it stands in the 1990s.

The book begins with a useful chapter on transmission and epidemiology by Gracey and is followed by a comprehensive review by Booth and McNichol of the pathophysiology of diarrhoea with good illustrative line diagrams. The various causes of diarrhoea, bacterial and viral are reviewed. In addition there is a clear and comprehensive account of parasitic infection of the gastrointestinal tract by Forthey. Arduino and DuPont discuss in detail the latest information concerning travellers’ diarrhoea.

Gazzard and Blanshard describe the role of gastrointestinal infection in patients with AIDS. Particular emphasis is given to cryptosporidiosis (the most common pathogen in AIDS patients) and microsporidiosis. There is, however, some overlap between this chapter and that on intestinal parasites.

Perhaps the book’s most practical chapter is by Cook who reviews diagnostic procedures in the investigation of infectious diarrhoea from the viewpoint of a practising clinician. Particular attention is given to recent advances in diagnostic techniques. This includes an account of rapid methods in aetiological diagnosis including toxin production, serological detection of bacterial antigens, and DNA hybridisation.

The important topic of rehydration and nutritional treatment of children with diarrhoea is reviewed by Rivin and Santosham. The book concludes with chapters on treatment and prevention of gastrointestinal infections describing the roles of antibiotics and vaccines. Cook gives a valuable approach to preventive strategy particularly against travellers’ diarrhoea. He emphasises that chemophylaxis, if used at all, must be confined to certain high risk groups. The latest field studies are reviewed.

This book is well produced with clear illustrations. It is strongly recommended as a practical and up to date source of reference for gastroenterologists and others with a particular interest concerning infection of the gastrointestinal tract.

J A WALKER-SMITH


This is an American multi-author book designed to furnish clinicians with guidelines for the appropriate drug treatment of patients with common gastrointestinal disorders. A distinguished and authoritative authorship tackles most of the drugs you would wish to know about covering both established agents and those in phase III trials, ranging from antimotility agents to ziluretans.

The book’s alphabetisation of completeness is generally mirrored by reasonably systematic completeness of information. The editor declares that the target audience includes all clinicians who care for patients with gastrointestinal disorders including medical students, residents, emergency room physicians, family practitioners, general internists, and physicians specialising in diseases of the alimentary tract and hepatobiliary organs. This aspiration was achieved.

The chapters were reviewed in a balanced way, but the author also indicated future developments and the potential for further progress as a result of advancing technology.

I do not know if it was by design but on the last page of the book there is the following text: “The future of gastroenterology is bright and exciting. We should look forward to a future in which we can cure and prevent gastrointestinal disease.”

D COLIN-JONES

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