
Book Reviews

Manual of Infection Control Procedures. Ed. N. N. Damani. Greenwich Medical Media Ltd. 1997. Pp. 201.

This book is aimed at Medical Microbiologists, Infection Control Doctors and Nurses, CCDCs and Hospital Clinicians. Its title suggests that it is practical in approach and would lend itself to incorporation in any hospital's infection control manual.

The book starts with a description of the key people and activities of relevance to infection control. This section has a distinctly UK perspective referring to, for example, the Department of Health recommendations on hospital infection control and the report of the food poisoning outbreak at Stanley Royde Hospital, Wakefield. There then follows a series of chapters giving practical advice on isolation, disinfection and other specific activities which can be of use in preventing nosocomial infection.

I was disappointed to note that the section on disinfection gives little information on spectrum of activity of the different agents covered. The section on specific pathogens contains good practical guidance but reference to new variant CJD is notable by its absence (although CJD itself is covered). Other important areas such as blood-borne viruses, handwashing and clinical waste are well dealt with and provide the important information in an easily digestible form.

The text is well referenced although more than three quarters of the references are from UK publications. Many of the non UK references were for chapters from Richard Wensell's excellent text *Prevention and Control of Nosocomial Infections*.

This book is not, nor does it pretend to be, a comprehensive reference work. Rather it aims to provide practical advice which is readily accessible and as such the text is a resounding success.

A. P. FRAISE

*Hospital Infection Research Laboratory, City Hospital
NHS Trust, Dudley Road, Birmingham*

New & Resurgent Infection. Prediction, Detection & Management of Tomorrow's Epidemics. Eds. B. Greenwood and K. de Cock. John Wiley & Sons 1998.

This volume is a collection of 17 essays by authors from various public health and epidemiological backgrounds.

Some are concerned with specific infections such as malaria, Ebola, BSE; others are of a more general nature and consider general principles of the detection and management of the outbreaks of infection.

Although emphasis is given to man's influence on the environment in contributing to epidemics, an introductory historical review also makes the point that infections have come and gone in the past, often apparently independent of man's activities. Moreover, the analysis of the factors involved in the spread of infection in recent times make it clear there are so many independent threads running through the concept of the emergence of infectious disease, that it is surprising anyone dares try to predict anything. For example the Peruvian press could hardly have expected an outbreak of cholera after unfounded scare stories about chlorine's carcinogenicity resulted in the discontinuation of water chlorination; similarly German environmentalists campaigning for reduced arsenic pollution of rivers are unlikely to have foreseen increased sleeping sickness in Africa when Melarsoprol production was reduced.

Repeatedly the difference between what is possible in the developed, and in the developing world, in terms of prediction, detection and management, is stressed. Attention is drawn to the different difficulties of detecting disease. Whilst the developed world may struggle to identify 'new' pathogens such as H1N1 and *E. coli* O157; in poor remote areas outbreaks of old diseases may be well advanced before reaching the attention of anyone capable of making a diagnosis. Ongoing reporting systems are evaluated, but found incomplete and full of uncertainties over the accuracy of diagnoses.

Prevention is of course better than cure, but also suffers pressures: there are difficulties in enforcing antibiotic policies when patients will pay to breach them, and the importance of immunization becomes questioned after it has succeeded in keeping a disease at bay. The book draws attention to the global extremes of management that occur, but at both ends of the wealth spectrum 'crisis management' approaches predominate, dictated either by limited resources or by reluctance to invest in preventive policies. And when intervention becomes inevitable, too often there may be vested interests, e.g. fears for tourism, clouding the information picture, or a need to respond to the views of the mass media.

Probably wisely, the authors do not try to predict what new diseases are likely to cause outbreaks in the future, and only conservative suggestions concerning the evolution of infectious diseases that have been problems in the recent,

and not so recent, past are considered. Cautionary note is made of the wide variation in estimates of diseases such as AIDS and BSE, revised in the past as outbreaks followed their own individual and unpredictable paths.

In the closing chapters a convincing case is made for ensuring that the press is able to present the public with an accurate picture and does not stampede opinion into inappropriate measures. A plea is made for improved surveillance and international co-operation, and that agencies providing support in management, particularly in the acute stages, should act in a co-ordinated fashion and pursue a common purpose, rather than their separate agendas.

Criticism are minor. I am not sure the book really lives up to its title, particularly in respect of 'prediction', although perhaps this is inevitable; and a couple of chapters by North American authors that are written from a purely USA perspective. However overall, for a reader with a general interest in public health or epidemiological aspects of infection, this book provides a wide range of fascinating insights, and is well worth a read.

S. P. BARRETT
*Department of Medical Microbiology,
Imperial College School of Medicine
at St Mary's Hospital, London W2 1PG*