

Book Review

DOI: 10.1017/S0950268803001870

MRSA: Current Perspectives. Eds. C. Fluit and F.-J. Schmitz. Horizon Scientific Press, 2003. Pp. 340. £90 hb. ISBN 0-9542464-5-4.

Staphylococcus aureus was first grown in pure culture and named in 1884 by Rosenbach. Isolates at that time would almost certainly have been susceptible to penicillin and the sulphonamides. Widespread resistance to these agents made them mostly redundant by the dawn of the 1950s when multiply resistant *S. aureus* strains were recognized. This was followed by the emergence of the 'hospital staphylococcus' in the 1960s and the identification of strains resistant to methicillin, an antibiotic which was stable in the presence of staphylococcal penicillinase. The rest, as they say, is history. Few microbiologists could have predicted the impact of methicillin-resistant *S. aureus* (MRSA) on infection control in hospitals and its apparent recent spread into the community.

This book pulls together contributions from experts in the field covering the detection of MRSA, mechanisms of antimicrobial resistance and its molecular and evolutionary basis as well as aspects of their pathogenesis, treatment and

control. It is a well-balanced book with a structured uniform format more or less adhered to by each of the contributors. Each chapter is able to stand alone as the contributors address each topic but this results in some overlap of introductory remarks and the occasional repetition. Nevertheless, most of the chapters are highly informative and detailed with references as late as 2002. The figures and illustrations, particularly in the chapters on mechanisms of methicillin resistance, molecular evolution, and epidemiological typing of MRSA, are well designed and will no doubt be reproduced in a number of presentations on the meetings circuit.

This book will appeal primarily to basic science researchers in the field and those engaged in epidemiological surveillance of strain types and their comparative properties. However, the chapters addressing treatment of MRSA and their prevention and control should serve to attract those with a more clinical remit. At £90 it is probably outside of the personal budget of all but a tiny minority of navel gazers but it should find a place in institutional and departmental libraries.

T. L. PITT

*Laboratory of Health Case Associated Infection,
Health Protection Agency, London NW9 5HT*