Book Reviews

A World Guide to Infections – Diseases, Distribution, Diagnosis, Mary E. Wilson. Pp. 769, not illustrated. Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 1991. Hardback, £80.

Many books devoted to tropical (and infectious) diseases and geographical medicine already exist. What then set the author of this substantial volume, from Cambridge, Massachusetts, on this tack? The *raison d'être* was 'to provide a ready source of information about which diseases were possible (in clinical practice in the USA) based on what the patient could provide – i.e. signs, symptoms, and a history of exposures.' 'Often the countries with the richest array of infectious disease problems were those most lacking in published data.' The book consists of three sections: the patient (history and common clinical findings, for example, fever, diarrhoea, and eosinophilia), the place ('an infectious disease profile for every geographical area of the world'), and the diseases (key features presented in a standard format).

The first section contains a wealth of information – arranged within a symptom/sign-orientated classification; there is more detailed information than in most texts on tropical/geographical medicine. Section two lists those countries (using a complicated system of coding) where various infections exist; this is followed by notes on those present in a particular geographical location. The third section contains notes about specific infections, and a few selected references. Most of the information in the appendices could have been included in the text; the index is adequate.

The sum total is a book midway between a tropical–geographical medicine text and a good medical dictionary. The author is to be congratulated on the enormous industry – but I for one shall continue using the better tropical medicine texts which usually do not give such clear guidelines on precise distribution of an infection, but provide greater detail.

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Laboratory Medicine – Test selection and interpretation, edited by J.H. Howanitz, P.J. Howanitz *et al.* Pp. xvii + 966, illustrated. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, London, New York, Melbourne, Tokyo, 1991. Hardback.

The welcome intention is to help the clinician request the appropriate test, in the proper container, at the best time, and interpret the result correctly.

The 45 co-authors cover chapters on chemistry tests, haematology, microbiology and blood transfusion. Tests are handled in a standard manner mentioning the collection container, any special requirements, the reference range or other indicated values, followed by a review of the causes of change.

I found a wealth of readable information within the remit, while the experts keep their feet on the ground, stressing that external influences can cause erroneous results.

The inevitable wish to be comprehensive has included the protein bound iodine which should be discouraged on grounds of health and safety, not to mention accuracy and precision, and yet the cholinesterase section is skimpy about genetic variations and Scoline sensitivity. I would like a more critical approach with attempts to establish protocols of investigation.

There is duplication, inevitably, but in a book on test selection and interpretation there is no requirement for pages of exquisitely coloured plates, or staining techniques, or haematology introductions of 20–30 pages. The book is not aimed at pathologists.

Who would use this well-produced book? The authors say clinicians, residents, students and laboratory workers. As a book of lists it could well be used by the student. I doubt if it would interest GP colleagues.

The intent will be worthwhile if clinicians accept there is no perfect test, and the more tests you request the more likely it is that you will unearth a result outside the reference range.

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Diagnostic Bronchoscopy: A teaching manual, edited by Peter Stradling. Pp. 185, 521 illustrations. Churchill Livingstone, London, Edinburgh, Melbourne, Tokyo, New York, 1991. Hardback, £70.

The sixth edition of this excellent work on bronchoscopy has been updated. The main advantage of this edition is the inversion of photographs and accompanying diagrams in recognition that most bronchoscopies are performed by the use of a fibre optic bronchoscope with the operator facing the patient. This should ease interpretation of appearances for those who are just gaining bronchoscopy experience. The clarity of the photographs (obtained by rigid bronchoscopy) is as always excellent. There have been relatively few modifications to the text. The chapter on 'indications for bronchoscopy' and the author's views on the advantages of rigid bronchoscopy and disadvantages of fibre optic bronchoscopy make interesting reading and reflect the author's enthusiasm for this procedure. The chapter on the techniques of using both types of bronchoscopes is very clear both in text and diagrams. There is relatively little attention paid to HIV infection and perhaps bronchoscopic appearances may be included in future editions.

This book is well written, superbly illustrated and amply fulfills its function as a teaching manual and should certainly be read by bronchoscopists in training.

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Annual Review of Public Health, Volume 12, 1991, edited by Gilbert S. Omenn, Jonathan E. Fielding and Lester B. Lave. Pp. vii + 585. Annual Reviews, Inc., Palo Alto, California, 1991. Hardback, \$45.00 USA and Canada, \$50.00 elsewhere.