BOOK REVIEW

Parasites in Human Tissues


Since there are myriad books in the field of parasitology and tropical medicine, the question one is likely to ask when first confronted with the title of this book is whether it is yet another parasitology text. Parasites in Human Tissues is neither a general parasitology text nor a tropical medicine text. For example, in the malaria selection the authors describe the malarial parasite within vessels and in tissues such as the liver. If one is in need of aid in the identification of the blood stages of the various malarial parasites, one should seek out standard parasitology texts or atlases. Similarly, this volume is not a reference for the morphology of intestinal protozoa or helminths. There is a companion Atlas of Parasitology that can be used for such purposes. Parasites in Human Tissues, however, is a superb reference text for the histological diagnosis of parasites.

The book is divided into the familiar, albeit arbitrary, divisions that have become part of any parasitology text, namely, protozoa, nematodes, trematodes, and arthropods; in addition there is a valuable section on artifacts. Series of helpful colorful charts in the beginning of the book assist the reader in understanding both the usual and the unusual locations of parasites within host tissues. For each parasite, there is a short summary of the biology and life cycle of the organism followed by brief descriptions of the clinical manifestations and pathogenesis of infection. There then follows a more detailed description of the parasite's morphology, followed by a reference list. This brief background is given so that the morphology of the parasite within the tissues can be put into proper context. However, this brief background should not be relied on as a standard reference.

The centerpiece of the book is the section on parasites within host tissues. Each of the colorful plates is accompanied by detailed text. There are blowups of areas that are interesting and diagnostic. Besides the routine sections stained with hematoxylin-eosin, there are also sections that have been stained with special stains (e.g., to demonstrate the presence of collagen or glycogen). With this volume, parasite pathology has now been brought into the new era with the aid of electron micrographs and immunofluorescence. It includes its share of uncommon worms in histological sections. However, it also offers the reader beautiful and detailed tissue sections of parasites such as Pneumocystis, Toxoplasma, Cryptosporidium, and members of the phylum Microspora, which have become important organisms in the pathogenesis of AIDS-related diarrhea.

This is an invaluable, exciting, colorful, and flawless text, which is a welcome addition to the library of parasitologists, pathologists, and infectious disease specialists who regularly examine tissue specimens. Both authors were students of Dr. Paul C. Beaver, who for many decades was one of the important resources for the histological diagnosis of parasites; because of this excellent volume, Dr. Beaver's legacy lives.

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