Infectious Diseases


This “color guide” contains 169 color photographs depicting clinical manifestations of a wide variety of infectious diseases. Photographs are generally clear and well chosen to aid the clinician. Physical findings of examination of the skin, throat, and eyes are especially well represented. Chest radiograms and histological slides are also provided, as well as brief descriptions of the etiology, incidence, pathogenesis, clinical features, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of disease entities.

Particularly well done are the photographs depicting skin and mucosal manifestations of such childhood diseases as chickenpox and measles. The pictures of the “slapped-cheek” appearance and lacerlike rash of erythema infectiosum are classic. Excellent photographs of patients with coxsackievirus and herpesvirus infections and Kawasaki syndrome are also provided. Photographs of manifestations of bacterial infections (e.g., meningococcal and streptococcal infections) are also good. Most interesting, and perhaps most useful for an infectious diseases specialist or dermatologist, are the photographs of unusual (for the United States) infections, such as diphtheria, orf, and anthrax.

Less well done is the accompanying text. The section on Lyme disease is particularly conspicuous. There are numerous inaccurate or misleading statements. For example, one gets the impression that Lyme disease occurs primarily in the spring and autumn and in a rural population, neither of which is true in the United States. The authors discuss experimental PCR analysis in the diagnosis of Lyme disease but neglect to mention the commonly-used and better-standardized analyses by ELISA and immunoblotting. Outdated information is provided concerning the incidence of multiple erythema migrans lesions (no longer called erythema chronicum migrans) and extracutaneous involvement associated with sexually transmitted diseases (although there are photographs of skin manifestations of disseminated gonorrhea and syphilis). In the toxoplasmosis section, pregnant women are advised to avoid kittens, but no mention is made that infection may be acquired by eating (and prevented by avoiding) improperly cooked beef. In a section on erythema nodosum, the Kveim test, which is no longer used in practice, is mentioned as a means of diagnosing sarcoid.

It is surprising that a color book entitled Infectious Diseases includes no photographs of gram stains. These are noticeably lacking in the sections on streptococcal and staphylococcal infections and gonorrhea. Although quite striking, the picture of late zoster involving the trigeminal distribution of a leukemic patient has more historical interest than clinical value in the age of antiviral agents. It would be more practical to include a photograph of positive results of a Tzanck test. Although there are several well-done photographs of Kaposi’s sarcoma, it would be useful to include a close-up view of a subtle solitary skin lesion, perhaps adjacent to a picture of a bacillary angiomatosi lesion.

Although the table of contents and index seem adequate, there does not seem to be a clear organization by topic (e.g., by pathogen class [virus vs. bacteria] or alphabetical order). With rare exception (e.g., the radiograph of varicella pneumonia), the chest radiograms do not add much to the book.

This is apparently the second edition of this book. A short preface summarizing changes and perhaps suggesting a proposed audience would be helpful. No price was noted on my copy. Cost might be a factor in choosing this book over other similar references.

In summary, the many excellent photographs in this book are potentially valuable to primary care physicians (especially early in their careers) and to medical students and house officers. Even specialists might do well to have these pictures as a reference. However, readers should be cautioned that the written information provided is not up to the high quality of the illustrations. Therefore, the reader would be best advised to compare a patient’s physical findings with those depicted in the book and then consult another reference to learn about specific ways to confirm the diagnosis, management, and treatment.

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