Tropical Medicine and Parasitology, 5th Edition

By Wallace Peters and Geoffrey Pasvol
London: Mosby, 2002. 334 pp., illustrated. $60.00 (paper).

This is a very useful volume, except for the title, “Tropical Medicine and Parasitology,” which implies that this is a textbook of tropical medicine. It is a superb collection of illustrations and an accessible introduction to the topic, but it is not a comprehensive treatment that includes discussion of diagnostic strategies and therapy, nor is it intended to be. The authors provide the reader with a well-organized and inclusive introduction to the topic that is built around abundant, high-quality illustrations accompanied by concise captions. The illustrations include depictions of specific clinical presentations, pathologic specimens, procedures, vectors, and reservoirs, as well as geographic maps, illustrations of the life cycles of infecting organisms, and graphs.

This is a new edition (the previous edition was published 5 years ago). The introduction contains an excellent review of recent advances and the new and ongoing challenges posed by diseases in tropical areas. The book is organized into sections by route of infection. This grouping of the pathogens helps the neophyte appreciate the ecology of many of the major diseases in the topics. The first chapter deals with arthropod-borne infections, from viral illnesses to nematode infections. With the exception of the curious inclusion of a small section on ehrlichiosis, which is not an illness encountered by physicians in the tropics, the selection of pathogens in this section is comprehensive and appropriate. The second and third sections discuss soil-mediated and snail-mediated helminthiases, respectively. There are chapters on sexually-transmitted infections, infections acquired via the gastrointestinal tract, and airborne infections. The AIDS-related material included in the book includes discussion of some clinical presentations that are unique to the tropics, but readers interested in this topic would be better served by an atlas specifically devoted to HIV/AIDS. The chapter on infections acquired through the skin and mucous membranes includes brief treatments of smallpox and cutaneous anthrax, which likely would have been more extensive if the section had been written after the events of September 11, the subsequent anthrax attacks, and the recent focus on the risks of bioterrorism. The final chapters include information on nutritional and miscellaneous disorders.

This book should not be used by clinicians seeking information about a specific pathogen or therapies. This book would be a very useful tool for fellows in infectious diseases programs who wish to get a visually based, broad overview of the topic or who are preparing for the certification examination in the field of infectious diseases. Clinicians wishing to quickly familiarize themselves with the scope and clinical presentation of illnesses that occur in the tropics will also find this book useful. The collection of illustrations is outstanding and, with the succinct and well-written captions, is worth the price of the book.

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Toxoplasmosis: A Comprehensive Clinical Guide

Edited by David H. M. Joynson and Tim G. Wreghitt
New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001. 410 pp., illustrated. $100.00 (cloth).

Toxoplasmosis: A Comprehensive Clinical Guide consists of 14 chapters about various clinical aspects of clinical toxoplasmosis written by individuals who are experts in their particular areas. During the past decade, fueled in part by the AIDS epidemic, there has been increased interest in the molecular biology and immunologic characteristics of Toxoplasma gondii. In addition, T. gondii has become a model organism for researchers interested in the other Apicomplexan parasites, such as Eimeria and Plasmodium species. The overall aim of this research has been to provide new data that should ultimately lead to improved diagnosis and treatment of toxoplasmosis.

A unique aspect of this book is that, before the first chapter, there is a historical outline that begins in the early 1900s, with the discovery of T. gondii, and continues to the recent era and the AIDS epidemic. This allows the reader to appreciate how much progress has been made in understanding this important obligate intracellular protozoan. The remaining chapters are in logical sequence, with the first 2 chapters discussing the general biologic and immunologic characteristics of toxoplasmosis. The chapter “Biology of Toxoplasmosis,” by Petersen and Dubey, is an excellent review, but it is not—not was it meant to be—a review of the recent advances in knowledge about the molecular biology of this organism. The chapter on immunology, by Hunter and Reichmann, provides a clear and concise overview of the vast literature on this subject. T. gondii has been an important model organism, and study of it has resulted in important insights into the immune response to pathogens. These first 2 chapters are both well written and well referenced, and they provide a solid basis for the understanding of the clinical diseases.

The third chapter, by Hall, Ryan, and Buxton, is about epidemiology, and it could be a monograph in its own right. It examines, in great detail, the epidemiologic characteristics of T. gondii infection in many different populations worldwide. This scholarly presentation contains more information on this subject than is present in any other systemic reviews published to date.
The remainder of this volume deals with specific clinical syndromes and their diagnosis and treatment. Although there is some overlap, these chapters are also well written and well referenced. The subjects of these chapters are *Toxoplasma* infections in immunocompetent hosts as well as in immunosuppressed hosts. In this regard, there are separate chapters for HIV-positive and HIV-negative patients.

There are 4 chapters about the diagnosis and treatment of *Toxoplasma* infection in mothers, fetuses, and newborns, including a very thoughtful chapter on prenatal screening, by Gilbert and Peckham. In this chapter, Gilbert and Peckham not only discuss the scientific aspects of prenatal screening, but they also devote considerable attention to ethical and psychological issues. Their chapter should be standard reading for all obstetricians who have been somewhat reluctant to aggressively pursue this aspect of practice. These chapters on infections in the fetus and neonate complement the section about toxoplasmosis in Remington and Klein’s *Infections of the Newborn* [1].

The chapter in *Toxoplasmosis: A Comprehensive Clinical Guide* by Dutton called “Ocular Toxoplasmosis” is an excellent review of this subject. Importantly, Dutton reiterates the point that ocular toxoplasmosis may occur as a result of both congenital and acquired infection. A chapter on chemotherapy, by McCabe, presents an excellent overview of the various treatment modalities in various disease syndromes associated with toxoplasmosis. Although there is some overlap with other chapters, it is an excellent treatise for clinicians who treat patients with toxoplasmosis. The final chapter is a short review, by Fishback and Frenkel, of the state of vaccine development. Despite the fact that this area of research has been poorly funded, the authors end on a note of optimism.

The appendices are very strong aspects of *Toxoplasmosis: A Comprehensive Clinical Guide*. They review disease classification and treatment modalities and provide important algorithms that should prove to be helpful in the clinical management of cases of toxoplasmosis.

The only weakness of this book is that it lacks a section about the recent advances in cell biology and molecular biology with regard to this pathogen; nonetheless, *Toxoplasmosis: A Comprehensive Clinical Guide* is an excellent review of the literature on the clinical and epidemiologic aspects of infection with this important and ubiquitous pathogen. This book can be enthusiastically recommended for medical students and graduate students who are engaged in research on toxoplasmosis. Practitioners in the fields of both adult and pediatric infectious diseases will find this volume extremely helpful when management questions arise. Obstetricians would also benefit by having this book in their office or hospital library, because it contains useful and practical information about practice, in addition to basic science.

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