Antimicrobial Agents: Antibacterials and Antifungals
Edited by André Bryskier

This book nobly attempts to summarize in the simplest form possible the extensive knowledge about antimicrobial agents to serve as a reference for students, infectious disease physicians, clinical and basic microbiologists, and chemists. The editor and the other contributors have performed admirably in this endeavor.

The first 3 chapters serve as an introduction for the remainder of the text. The first chapter discusses the principal features of infectious diseases, the second chapter is a summary and review of the different classes of drugs, and the third chapter discusses the epidemiology of resistance.

Subsequent chapters systematically discuss some of the problems of development of new anti-infective agents. Each class or family of antibacterial or antifungal molecules—past, present, and under development—is discussed in detail, with respect to chemical structure, derivatives, mechanism of action, and anti-infective activity. Some chapters are more detailed than others, likely because of the differences among the individual authors. The chapters pertaining to β-lactams, the macrolide-lincosamide-streptogramin family, and quinolones are very detailed. Development of daptomycin is reported to have been abandoned because of therapeutic failures. If an electronic version or Web site accompanied the text, new developments could be discussed, and the utility of the current version could be extended.

Acknowledgments


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A Guide for Hospital Preparedness
Joseph R. Masci and Elizabeth Bass
Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press, 2005. 361 pp. $139.95 (cloth).

The events of 11 September 2001 and the subsequent anthrax attacks focused attention on emergency preparedness for hospitals across the United States. More recent events, such as outbreaks of severe acute respiratory syndrome, Hurricane Katrina, and preparations for a pandemic outbreak of influenza, have intensified this focus. Issues such as surge capacity, availability of staff during a crisis, facility evacuation, incident management, relationships with public health authorities, personal protective equipment, and dealing with the “worried well” have all become prominent among the challenges faced by hospitals today.

Joseph R. Masci and Elizabeth Bass’s book Bioterrorism: A Guide for Hospital Preparedness serves as a basic primer on these issues and more. Written in clear, nontechnical prose, the book is useful to many levels of hospital employees and management, but especially to planners of hospital emergency preparedness. It covers a wide breadth of emergency preparedness issues, including some that are relatively neglected, such as managing stress for staff, developing effective relationships with the media, and the role of the office-based private practitioner in emergency preparedness. Masci and Bass also review relevant aspects of the 2001 anthrax attacks and severe acute respiratory syndrome to help inform and guide each chapter. This “lessons learned” approach helps integrate their recommendations with real life events and is especially valuable.

The authors review all of the bioterrorism category A agents. Although this section will not satisfy the needs of the treating physician, it does serve as a useful overview of each agent, providing basic information. Again, lessons learned for each agent that are based on either real events or large drills, such as Top Officials (TOPOFF) and Dark Winter, are welcome for planning purposes. Other useful features of the book include a section of frequently asked questions that is applicable to the lay public, as well as a list of specific questions that relate to hospital employees. There is also a list of useful Web sites and a chapter on pediatric issues in bioterrorism.

The book concludes with a series of tabletop exercises that is specifically relevant to hospital personnel. Although these exercises are not extensive, they do provide a relatively easy way for small groups of
hospital personnel to review basic concepts of emergency preparedness. The exercises follow an easy-to-moderate format that includes brief background information presented in 2 or 3 “injects,” each of which is followed by a short list of questions. Appropriate job titles of hospital personnel are suggested for each tabletop.

The strength of this book is also its weakness: in the admirable attempt to cover a great breadth of material, the authors necessarily sacrifice detail. Those who focus on 1 aspect of hospital preparedness will need to supplement their knowledge by looking elsewhere for this detail. The book does not cover hospital laboratory issues well, especially relationships with public health laboratories, which can be just as critical as the relationships needed between physicians and health departments. However, this book will serve as a good overview for new hospital planners, as well as a useful and durable review for all others in this rapidly evolving field.

Acknowledgments

Potential conflicts of interest. I.B.W.: no conflicts.

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