Vaccines, 6th Edition

Vaccines are widely regarded as one of the greatest achievements of medicine.
Since the discoveries of Dr. Edward Jenner, 14 major infectious diseases have been at least partially controlled by vaccination. As Bill Gates notes in his foreword to this outstanding book, “The simple truth is vaccines save lives.” The current edition of Vaccines represents the sixth iteration of this key reference book for anyone with any interest in vaccines. The fifth edition came out in 2008, and in this new edition, all chapters have been revised and updated. The text is detailed, up-to-date, complete, and well written. The illustrations are informative and in full color. The tables excel in completeness, but a minor downside of the layout of the print edition is that some of the tables are printed sideways on the page, which is not very convenient for such a large a volume. An online edition accompanies the book, which is basically a searchable version of the text and is the only place to find the complete reference lists. A nice feature of the website is the direct link from any reference to PubMed. Unfortunately, the online search options are somewhat limited.

The book is divided into 5 sections. The first section contains 8 chapters that deal with general aspects of vaccination. These chapters provide complete and detailed background information. For instance, the chapter on the vaccine industry provides an insightful overview of economic drivers of vaccine development and pricing. The second section, “Licensed Vaccines,” comprises the most useful chapters for the majority of the intended audience. All currently licensed vaccines are discussed in detail, often with complete data on relevant vaccine trials. Advances in therapeutic cancer vaccines are also discussed. It is sometimes not immediately clear where a given vaccine is on the timeline to be licensed, and some chapters in this section may have benefited from an introductory figure or table to that effect. In addition to vaccines in development, this section also has chapters on novel methods of vaccine delivery, technologic advances, and genetic vector usage. The fourth section deals with specific populations, such as immunocompromised hosts, travelers, and healthcare workers. The fifth and final section describes public health and regulatory issues. These are very interesting chapters, which are evidently less applicable to the individual patient but provide detailed and pertinent information for anyone with an interest in vaccines and public health.

Overall, the book is extremely readable. It is easy to get engrossed in just about any chapter. When looking for specific information on vaccines, you will find it where you would expect it. It provides a well-balanced view of all aspects of vaccinology. In summary, the sixth edition of Vaccines represents an absolute must for infectious disease practitioners, vaccinologists, public health officials, and anyone who wants to learn more about one of the most important medical accomplishments in history.

Note

Potential conflicts of interest. Author certifies no potential conflicts of interest.

The author has submitted the ICMJE Form for Disclosure of Potential Conflicts of Interest. Conflicts that the editors consider relevant to the content of the manuscript have been disclosed.

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