Since the publication of the second edition of *Communicable Disease Epidemiology and Control* in 2005, the world has had to deal with the potential threat of avian influenza, witnessed a pandemic of new H1N1 influenza, had a setback with the consolidation phase of poliomyelitis eradication, and observed the global spread of community-acquired methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, extensively drug-resistant tuberculosis, and expanded-spectrum β-lactamase (ESBL)-producing Gram-negative bacteria. The world has also introduced and begun to use new vaccines against human papillomavirus infection, rotavirus diarrhea, and herpes zoster. Communicable diseases and their control constantly change, and a book that evolves along with these changes is welcome.

The third edition of this book is organized very similarly to the first 2 editions. It is divided into 3 parts. Part 1 includes 5 chapters that discuss the theory and practice of communicable disease epidemiology and control. One new section in chapter 4 (“Control Strategy and Organization”) discusses social factors in disease control, dealing with issues such as social stigma associated with disease and the role of self-help programs. Part 2 (chapters 6–18) covers selected diseases on the basis of their modes of transmission. The section on Buruli ulcer is a new addition under “Diseases of Water Contact” (chapter 11), based on recent observations regarding the mode of transmission of this mycobacterial infection. Part 3 comprises 1 chapter that lists 340 communicable diseases in a tabular format, classified by clinical features, means of transmission, and incubation period.

The distinct feature of this book is the author’s conscious effort to classify communicable diseases according to their modes of transmission, which serve as potential targets for intervention. For example, there is a chapter entitled “Water-washed Diseases” that includes scabies, lice, dermatophytosis, tropical ulcers, and trachoma. There is a separate chapter on skin infections. At first glance, the basis for the separation of these diseases in this manner is not obvious, but if one recognizes that the diseases covered under “Water-washed Diseases” are indeed preventable by plentiful access to clean water and those under “Skin Infections” are not, the structure makes sense. The author acknowledges that there is more than 1 means of transmission for many of the diseases covered and that no classification system is perfect.

Indeed, the classification of communicable diseases is not an easy task, and the author attempts to achieve the right balance by covering certain diseases in more detail, while other diseases are superficially discussed. However, it is often unclear what criteria were used to include or exclude certain diseases in part 2 of the book. For example, 12 of the 14 pages in the chapter “Food-borne Diseases” are dedicated to helminths; *Campylobacter* enteritis is given half a page; and salmonellosis, perhaps the most important cause of foodborne disease worldwide, is mentioned briefly under the general category “Food Poisoning Due to Bacteria.” In 1 table in the same chapter, the classification of diarrhea does not follow the usual scheme (watery, inflammatory, chronic) and includes salmonellosis as part of “acute watery diarrhea.” The chapter “Diseases Transmitted by Body Fluids” begins with diseases such as yaws and pinta, but human immunodeficiency virus infection is not discussed until the 13th subsection of the chapter. The author states that the emphasis of the book is on communicable diseases of developing countries, but the selection of or emphasis on particular diseases in some of the chapters is not consistent with this claim. Despite this selection method, however, the book turns out to be very informative, because the diseases that we do not often see in developed countries can be readily and quickly reviewed.

The chapter that obviously requires regular updating is the one called “New and Emerging Diseases.” This new edition includes 2 new sections—“Avian Influenza” and “Hospital Infection and Antibiotic-resistant Organisms.” While avian influenza is given proper attention, the discussion on antibiotic-resistant organisms is disappointingly limited. The global spread of drug-resistant organisms is one of the major contemporary communicable disease concerns, and nothing is mentioned about, for example, ESBL-producing Gram-negative bacteria or carbapenem-resistant *Klebsiella pneumoniae*. Nevertheless, the author does make a notable attempt to keep current.

Each disease covered in the main part of the book includes discussions on clinical features, diagnosis, transmission, incubation period, period of communicability, occurrence and distribution, control and prevention, treatment, and surveillance, similarly to the way other books, such as Benenson’s *Control of Communicable Diseases in
Man (1) or the Report of the Committee on Infectious Diseases (2), organize communicable diseases. Of course, each book has its distinct emphasis, and because of this book’s unique classification method, it complements the other texts, which are often used by public health trainees (1) and clinicians (2).

The book does have a unique style that sets it apart from other, similar texts. In the beginning section, the author uses clear, easily understandable examples to introduce basic concepts in the epidemiology and theory of communicable diseases; this is followed by a section that describes many of the diseases in their historical context and provides memorable examples of epidemics, outbreaks, and classic disease investigations. The use of simple illustrations, summary tables, and bullet-marked outlines, as well as the straightforward narrative with minimal reliance on technical terminology, makes this book a smooth read and invites its use as a quick reference guide. The last chapter, which lists 340 communicable diseases, nicely complements the first 2 parts of the book. It also contains a section on “Further Reading,” but the inclusion of detailed reference citations would have been more effective. Nevertheless, this book is particularly useful for anyone who wishes to review, refresh, or quickly learn about communicable diseases that are more prevalent in tropical countries and some of the new approaches used by local and international organizations to control them.

REFERENCES


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