

Book Reviews

***The biology of the mycobacteria Volume 3. Clinical aspects of mycobacterial disease.* Editors: C Ratledge, J Stanford, J M Grange**

This is the third part of a four volume publication. This volume is devoted to the diseases that mycobacteria cause in man, whereas the first and second volumes dealt with mycobacterial physiology, identification and classification, and immunological and environmental aspects respectively. The arrival of a volume on the clinical aspects of mycobacterial disease is appropriate since this is, after all, the principal reason for the great and increasing interest in the mycobacteria, and is particularly timely since the current situation is such that in parts of the world where tuberculosis is declining, the relative frequency of clinical infections caused by other mycobacteria is rising—this is, therefore, the subject of much investigation and research. Of great importance, also, are the complications that may arise as a result of concomitant HIV infection, and the possible consequences of vaccination, for example with BCG, of individuals who are immunocompromised.

The book is a multiauthor publication which brings together a wealth of information on the study of mycobacterial disease. The authors provide extensive coverage of their particular area and a comprehensive list of references. In addition, it is illustrated throughout with a series of excellent photographs and diagrams.

The book commences with a thorough overview of the historical and current aspects of mycobacterial infection. The authors discuss man's ancient struggle to understand and conquer tuberculosis and leprosy, the extent of these problems in the world today, and how the study of the signs, symptoms and patterns of behaviour of these diseases, can be used to design and monitor control measures and to develop and deploy effective therapy. There is also an evaluation of the biochemical knowledge of mycobacterial metabolism and a review of the histopathology and morphology of many mycobacterial infections.

There are extensive reviews of both pulmonary and extrapulmonary tuberculosis including epidemiology, pathogenesis, diagnosis, prognosis and control, as well as a further chapter on the chemotherapy of tuberculosis. The section on leprosy gives detailed coverage of both the clinical aspects of this debilitating disease and the reactions which may occur. Histopathology, immunology and precipitating factors are discussed in addition to the possible mechanisms of the reactional state and the principles of management.

Many of the dozens of so-called 'environmental' mycobacteria such as *M. ulcerans*, *M. marinum*, *M. chelonae*, *M. fortuitum*, *M. avium-intracellulare*, *M. kansasii*, *M. xenopi* and *M. scrofulaceum* to name but a few are covered in two chapters on mycobacterial infections of the skin and of the deep tissues of man. Although uncommon relative to tuberculosis and leprosy, these organisms may cause devastating and most unpleasant disease in individual patients.

The final chapter looks to the future and at types of immunotherapy which may be employed to manipulate the immune response. Immunotherapy is currently seen as a potentially highly effective adjunct to conventional chemotherapeutic measures and aims to enhance the immune competence of the individual to enable the elimination of persistent bacilli following chemotherapy and the recognition of key bacillary antigens by the patient.

One of the main aims of the editors of this volume is to show that there is a continuous spectrum of knowledge from the fundamentals of basic research to the organization of a programme of eradication of mycobacterial disease. Thus, this book is likely to be of great benefit to both basic scientists and medical practitioners wishing to bridge the gap between the latest research data and the applicability of such information to clinical problems in the field.

A fourth volume in this series on the biology of mycobacteria is now being contemplated to deal with major recent advances in molecular biology, immunology and immunogenetics and the effect of the advent of the acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) on the epidemiology and control of the mycobacterioses.

Sue Sibley

Published by Academic Press, London, 1989.

Leprosy: Basic information and management, 2nd edition. A C McDougall and S J Yawalkar

Leprosy is still a major health problem in many developing countries, with a WHO estimate of 10–12 million victims worldwide. This disease causes particularly deep suffering, as in addition to physical disfigurements and disabilities, patients have to bear the social stigma of their illness. However, the availability of multiple drug therapy (MDT) in recent years has enabled great progress to be made in the control of leprosy, contributing to a positive prognosis for many of these patients and reducing spread of the disease by lowering the infectivity of sufferers.

This booklet is the second edition of a publication providing a valuable source of basic and accurate information about leprosy and its management, which the authors hope will be of practical value in bringing successful therapy to all of those whom it would benefit. It is intended mainly for nonmedical readers such as community leaders, social workers, teachers, and patients and their families. Medical terminology is, therefore, kept to a minimum, or where used is fully explained, but this does not mean that it would not be useful background reading for paramedical workers in the field, or as an introduction to leprosy for medical students.

The booklet commences with an overview of the historical and global aspects of leprosy, and goes on to describe the causative organism, *Mycobacterium leprae*, and the possible routes of transmission. There are useful indications for health workers of the diverse clinical signs and symptoms over the broad spectrum of the disease to assist in diagnosis and differentiate from the many other skin disorders which may be prevalent in the area. Recommended regimens of treatment with dapsone, rifampicin and clofazimine, the principle antileprosy drugs of the MDT programme, are given, as well as advice for the management of complications such as 'reactions,' ulceration, paralysis, blindness, and chapped skin due to loss of sweating. Further sections describe the benefits of reconstructive surgery and 'grip-aids' to facilitate the use of tools and appliances by patients with crippled hands, and warn of the possible consequences of the advent of the AIDS virus in many of the countries where leprosy is endemic.

Health education, such as the need for complete compliance with treatment and early detection of infection before irreversible damage to nerves has occurred, is stressed throughout.

This publication is to be made available in Spanish and French in addition to English and should, therefore, attract a wide readership amongst people who are associated with leprosy in one way or another.

Sue Sibley

Published by Ciba-Geigy Ltd, Basle 1989.