THE three volumes of this book set out to cover the common and not so common zoonotic diseases. As the title implies, in many cases, for example actinomycosis, the diseases covered are common to humans and animals rather than being transmitted from animals to man. Volume 1 covers bacterial and mycotic diseases, volume 2, chlamydial, rickettsial and viral diseases and volume 3 deals with parasitic diseases. Each disease is dealt with systematically under the headings of: Etiology, Geographic Distribution, Occurrence in man, Occurrence in animals, Disease in man, Disease in animals, Source of infection and mode of transmission, Role of animals in the epidemiology of the disease, Diagnosis, and Control. This is followed by a bibliography. The style makes it easy to gain a quick overview or refresher on any particular disease that is covered. However, it does not lend itself to differential diagnosis based on clinical signs or symptoms. This means that the books are probably more useful for students, clinicians, epidemiologists, researchers and public health workers needing a quick update on a particular disease than for the diagnostician in the field or clinic.

Despite the fact that the book is produced by the Pan American Health Organization and aims to be of most use in the Americas, there is good coverage of infectious diseases from the rest of the world. Obviously in such a set of books some selections have to be made and these sometimes appear quite quirky. For example there is no mention of Nipah virus in Malaysia, an emerging disease transmitted between bats, pigs and humans, but there is a long section on rotaviruses for which transmission between animals and humans is probably not important.

Each section gives a good overview of the disease with references to the literature. However, the references are frequently not current and in many cases do not take account of the molecular revolution that is occurring in diagnosis and epidemiology. This means that the information seems very dated and I had the impression of reading a text book from the late 1980s or early 1990s rather than from 2003. One topical example is that of the 16 page section on influenza virus. The most recent reference is from 1994 and there is no mention of the 1997 H5N1 avian influenza outbreak in Hong Kong where there was direct transmission from birds to humans and the death of six of 18 infected patients. In an attempt at control all of the chickens in Hong Kong were slaughtered.

This was not always the case, with some sections, for example that on West Nile Virus, being up to date with references to articles from 2001. However, the overall impression was that the updating and revision for this third edition had been somewhat patchy. This was reinforced by minor issues such as referring to the causative agent of meliodosis as *Pseudomonas pseudomallei* when it has for many years now been placed in the genus *Burkholderia*.

Overall, I found these volumes interesting and a useful source of information on human and animal diseases that is often scattered amongst different text books. They are books for sourcing information on a particular disease rather than for reading. However, it would usually be necessary to complement the information with other more up to date sources particularly on diagnostics and epidemiology of emerging diseases.


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