

## Book Review

### Sexually Transmitted Infections and HIV

Dan Clutterbuck

Elsevier Mosby (2004)

Paperback, 289 pp

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Clutterbuck's book is a completely new publication in the Elsevier series of 'Specialist Training in...' manuals and offers an up-to-date basic STI/HIV text with a fresh approach. The author has aimed the book at a wide audience, being suitable as an initial text for those training in sexual health, both medical and non-medical, as well as those working in general practice or family planning settings. It is more comprehensive than the 'ABC' books, but its B5 size and reader-friendly format make it more accessible than lengthier tomes such as McMillan or Holmes.

The opening chapter outlines a modern approach to the sexual health consultation and this sets the tone for the rest of the book. The sexual-history-taking content provides a useful framework for those new to the field—the author's background in general practice is evident with emphasis placed on effective communication in this setting. New practitioners are guided in how to ask sensitively about difficult topics such as anal sex or how to deal with embarrassment in the sexual health consultation. These invaluable tips are provided in a language that our patients use and understand and this is a feature that I feel breaks new ground for a textbook of this kind. Providing written examples of what to say and what not to say can add to the early formative influences from which the learning clinician will develop their individual style.

Chapters are broken down according to the usual diseases and syndromes, with useful sections dealing with common presentations such as genital dermatoses, prostatitis syndromes and MSM enteric infections. Suitable coverage is given to the standard STIs, viral hepatitis and HIV, with the latter topic given 80 pages of compact up-to-date coverage including key areas such as PEP, adherence, antiretroviral resistance and practical notes on the use of currently licensed ARVs. All of the content is presented in a glossy colour format with lots of useful algorithms, diagrams and tables. The reader's eye is drawn to various breakout sections and boxes that include clinical notes, case

histories and summary sections. Illustrations are insightful with full-body diagrammatic drawings of syndromes such as SARA and secondary syphilis—these provide a more effective teaching tool than descriptive paragraphs alone. All clinical chapters are interspersed with large, well-rendered colour slides (including some from the Don Jacobs collection with the kind permission of the AChSHM). Each chapter ends with a PBL-style self-assessment section using realistic clinical scenarios and problems to tease out key points, complemented by a reference list for further reading. This is an increasingly popular format amongst medical student texts and, despite its volume, this book would be a sound teaching tool for keener students with interest in the field.

Drawbacks of the book are few; if utilised within a busy clinic setting the paperback format could quickly become worn due to frequent use by a range of clinicians. Some of the content is somewhat prescriptive for a UK audience (e.g. epidemiology, screening algorithms, treatment guidelines), though this would be easily adapted to the relevant local setting. Some sections give short shrift to more complicated conditions, such as tertiary syphilis. The author does comment on this and justifies their omission on the basis of their rarity in the modern setting; heavier books would cover these areas if needed.

Overall, the book conveys its messages effectively in a colourful and interesting format that is well indexed and easy to read. The content is modern and the evidence base sound, ensuring some longevity for the book in this rapidly changing field. As a first reader for those new to the field, it is a point in the right direction and would make an ideal update for anyone's general medical library.

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