

diagnosis and management unless they are taking examinations. Other conditions such as alloimmune thrombocytopenia and neutropenia are almost never encountered. Nevertheless, these conditions, collectively known as the alloimmune cytopenias, may still cause serious perinatal morbidity and even mortality. Rhesus isoimmunisation occurs more frequently in northern Chinese and some non-Chinese Asian people. Furthermore, maternal immunisation to foetal blood cells, including red cells, white cells, and platelets, occurs in all ethnic groups, even though many cases have probably been overlooked. Increasing awareness of these conditions, together with the changing ethnic composition in Hong Kong, could well lead to a rise in the diagnosis of these conditions in the future.

Since the management of these conditions is unfamiliar to most doctors practising in Hong Kong, the recent publication of the book titled *Alloimmune disorders of pregnancy: anaemia, thrombocytopenia, and neutropenia in the foetus and neonate* edited by Dr Hadley and Professor Soothill will provide a useful and handy reference. Since the effective prevention, diagnosis, and management of these disorders require nothing less than the combined efforts of obstetricians, paediatricians, haematologists, pathologists, and laboratory staff, this book will be suitable for all these specialists. This book will also be a most welcome addition to the departmental libraries of the specialists involved in the management of these patients.

Beginning with the pathophysiology of the alloimmune cytopenias, the book then examines in detail the various aspects of haemolytic diseases of the foetus and newborn and maternal RhD alloimmunisation, alloimmune thrombocytopenia, and alloimmune neutropenia. In addition to the clinical perspectives, comprehensive information is given by the many expert contributors on laboratory methods, including molecular biology and genetics. The content is accurate and up-to-date. One example is the comprehensive discussion on the epidemiology and screening for alloimmune thrombocytopenia. This can be taken

as a clinical guideline, and may also help in medicolegal situations. The chapter on alloimmune neutropenia is particularly enlightening since so little is known about this condition, which tends to be underdiagnosed. Even clinicians not closely involved with the management of patients with alloimmune cytopenias can obtain helpful information on other situations. For instance, one can get a clear idea of the various red cell alloantibodies and the screening tests in antenatal determination of maternal blood group and cross-matching from Chapter 3. The method for the calculation of the size of foeto-maternal haemorrhage can be found in Chapter 6. Thus, this is a practical book.

Each chapter in this book comprises a number of sections that are precise and concise, being written in the form of expanded notes that is so beloved by local doctors. The chapters are also well referenced. Some readers may find the book too 'matter-of-fact', and that the chapters are not particularly well illustrated. I find the illustrations appropriate, however, and the chapters are easy to read even for clinicians with little laboratory background. For busy trainees and specialists alike, who have to prepare for presentations, examinations, or patient management, this book provides a user-friendly and helpful source of reference.

In conclusion, this book is well presented and contains the latest clinical and research data. It is definitely worth acquiring by all involved departments for their libraries. For individuals who treat patients with alloimmune cytopenias and those who have a strong quest for knowledge that is not readily available from the usual sources, this book belongs to the must-buy category.

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## Epidemiological studies: a practical guide, second edition

By: Silman AJ, Macfarlane GJ

Cambridge University Press, The Edinburgh Building, Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 2RU, United Kingdom  
GB£21.95, pp 256, ISBN 0 521 00939 1 (paperback); GB£65.00, ISBN 0 521 81097 3 (hardback)

This book takes a holistic approach to the subject of epidemiology, aiming to be a practical guidebook for post-graduate students in public health and epidemiology. The book includes an introduction to epidemiological methods, practical issues in conducting studies, data collection, analysis, and interpretation, and also contains two useful chapters on ethical and cost issues. The presentation is simple and straightforward, and it is easy-to-read for

those with some background training in epidemiology and biostatistics. The book may pose difficulties for the novice, however, and the content may not be easily comprehended by clinicians, as the authors have presented a large amount of material concisely in a slim text of 236 pages.

Examples of specific content include 'age-period-cohort models', misclassifications in ecological studies, and

design effects in cluster sampling. The reader with difficulties in comprehending the intricacies of such concepts is well advised to consult more specific texts. Likewise, the reader looking for information on more 'specialist' methods commonly used in current epidemiological research such as time series studies and small area studies has to access this content elsewhere.

Confounding is covered in sufficient detail as a separate chapter, as is bias. Effect modification and interaction are not mentioned at all, however, while reproducibility, agreement, and the kappa statistic are presented in detail. This is in concordance with the aim of the book—to be a practical guide—but it would have been helpful if the authors had added a list of further reading materials for the benefit of first-time epidemiology students.

As a textbook in epidemiology, the coverage on biostatistics is necessarily brief. The authors are also selective in their emphasis on other topics. For example, the Mantel-Haenszel method for odds ratio calculation is described in detail, although not commonly used, while the principles, conditions, and limitations of multivariate methods, such as logistic regression, are not adequately dealt with. Rather than using more space to present the 'standard' approach

of multivariate analysis, the authors opined (not without valid reason) that discussion of these methods is already widely available. The reader is advised to familiarise himself/herself with the basic principles of statistics, in particular, multiple linear and logistic regression, techniques commonly utilised in epidemiological studies, in order to enhance their understanding of the issues covered by the book.

The book is interspersed with examples, which are helpful. More worked examples and practical exercises, published as a workbook, would be a useful supplement for students of epidemiology. Overall, this book is a good guidebook for practitioners of epidemiology. The first-time student of epidemiology may find it too concise, however, and would benefit from supplementing it with other texts for specific topics not adequately covered. A basic understanding of statistics is also required to help the student fully comprehend the concepts explored.

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## **Answers to CME Programme**

### ***Hong Kong Medical Journal***

#### **April 2003 issue**

HKMJ 2002;9:83-90

#### **I. Tuberculosis in Hong Kong—patient characteristics and treatment outcome**

A	1. False	2. False	3. False	4. False	5. True
B	1. True	2. True	3. True	4. False	5. False
C	1. True	2. True	3. True	4. True	5. False

HKMJ 2002;9:103-7

#### **II. Ambulatory stapled haemorrhoidectomy: a safe and feasible surgical technique**

A	1. False	2. True	3. True	4. True	5. False
B	1. False	2. True	3. False	4. False	5. False