

Zoonoses

Ed: Palmer SR, Lord Soulsby, Simpson DIH

*Oxford University Press, 18/F Warwick House East, Taikoo Place, 979 King's Road, Quarry Bay, Hong Kong
HK\$2140.00, pp 948, ISBN 0 19 262380 X*

Zoonoses is a comprehensive book on infections that has been compiled by more than 90 authors of various areas of expertise. Their aim is stated clearly in the preface—namely, to develop a coordinated medico-veterinary approach to investigating and controlling zoonoses. The book is divided into three sections according to aetiology: bacterial, chlamydial, and rickettsial zoonoses; viral zoonoses; and parasitic zoonoses. The disease nomenclature has been standardised, but allowance has also been made for well-established names of some diseases. Emphasis is placed on the epidemiology, agent, host and environmental relations, and the prevention and control of zoonoses. Diagnosis and treatment are also covered, although in less detail.

The alphabetical arrangement of the chapters within the three sections suggests the 'reference'

utility of this book, although the editor claims that the book is not meant to be all-inclusive. In particular, the epidemiological review of infections in some chapters is confined to discussing data from the United Kingdom or the United States, because fewer epidemiological data are available from other countries. Overall, *Zoonoses* is more useful as a reference for public health workers, veterinary workers, and microbiologists, than for clinicians and specialists in infectious diseases.

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Peer review in health sciences

Ed: Godlee F, Jefferson T

*BMJ Books, BMA House, Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9JR, United Kingdom
£30.00, pp 286, ISBN 0 7279 1181 3*

Peer review is used widely in the health sciences—for example, to award grants, to decide which research articles to publish, to monitor continuing medical education, to assess the quality of care, and to optimise the utilisation of facilities and services. But is peer review fair, effective, and efficient; can and should it be standardised; and how can its integrity be checked? *Peer Review in Health Sciences* gathers together the scant research that has been conducted so far on the effectiveness and methodology of peer review of grant applications and journal submissions, and attempts to make transparent this seemingly elusive but indispensable quality-control mechanism.

Because research into the peer review of grant applications has lagged behind that of editorial review, *Peer Review in Health Sciences* contains more detail

about the latter. Topics include current peer review practices, their inherent flaws and biases, how to be a reviewer, what happens after manuscript acceptance, and the challenges faced by editors of smaller journals. The increased global interest in improving the lengthy, conventional editorial peer review procedure (targeted and anonymous pre-paper publication review) and the wider acceptance of the discipline 'journalology' are timely. The Internet has transformed medical publishing, so that editorial peer review—unlike deciding how to fairly assign limited research funding—is no longer an analogous process that assigns limited publication space. The worldwide web now hosts an exclusively on-line medical journal (*Medscape General Medicine*, available at <<http://www.medscape.com>>) and a 'preprint' publication site <<http://clinmed.netprints.org>>, and it allows all