

Toxoplasmosis: a comprehensive clinical guide

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Toxoplasma gondii is one of the most successful parasites in the world, due to the development of a complex biological relationship with man. In the past, toxoplasmosis has been a common but often neglected infection. The disease has, however, aroused attention in the past 2 decades as an emerging infection that causes significant morbidity and mortality in patients with HIV infection and AIDS. Its importance in the causation of congenital abnormalities has now been recognised.

This book is a comprehensive clinical guide to toxoplasmosis, written by a team of experts from different disciplines under the editorship of two prominent authorities in the field. Starting with an interesting historical perspective, the book is divided into 14 chapters and four appendices. After a masterly in-depth account of the bio-immunological and epidemiological background of toxoplasmosis, there is a detailed description of the infection in immunocompetent, HIV-infected, and immunosuppressed (HIV-negative) patients. Four chapters are devoted to infection of the mother and child (foetus, neonate, and infant) and screening in the prenatal and postnatal periods. Finally, the book ends with the inclusion of ocular infection, laboratory diagnosis, anti-toxoplasma chemotherapy, and vaccines.

One obvious feature of this book is the discussion on laboratory diagnosis and chemotherapy at the end. These aspects have been deliberated in various circumstances in the preceding chapters. There are invariably areas of repetition and overlap in this approach. Whether this is detrimental to easy reading of the book is contentious. My view is that these two chapters might better serve as an overview and a summary, and this can be achieved by simplification of the contents and cross references to the materials that have appeared earlier. Immunotherapy with interferon- γ

and interleukin-12 as an adjunctive treatment for patients with AIDS who are severely immunocompromised might preferably have been discussed in some detail in an advanced work of this calibre.

The use of prophylactic anti-convulsant medicines is not recommended in the chapter on toxoplasmic encephalitis. The author should have also mentioned that anti-convulsants are sometimes necessary for the treatment of seizures and attention should have been drawn to the potential interaction between sulphadiazine and phenytoin. The chapter on vaccines aims to show the way forward by providing the theoretical basis and reporting on the experimental studies. However, it is a disappointment for clinicians as no clinical application has yet been identified. No vaccine is available for humans and there is not likely to be one in the foreseeable future.

Despite these comments, I think this book is superbly written and the style is consistent owing to the efforts of the editors. It is highly readable and the factual information is accurate. Its place as a major textbook on toxoplasmosis is going to be well established. This book should be the standard reference for infectious disease physicians, microbiologists, and practitioners of related specialties, for example, haematological oncologists, transplant specialists, and obstetricians. Although not everyone would want to own a copy, the text deserves a place on the shelf of departmental or institutional libraries.

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Alloimmune disorders of pregnancy: anaemia, thrombocytopenia, and neutropenia in the foetus and neonate

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To many obstetricians and paediatricians in Hong Kong, problems such as rhesus isoimmunisation and haemolytic

disease of the foetus and neonate are so rarely encountered in clinical practice that there is little need to remember the