

Emerging Infections 5

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A.M.L. Oude Lashof

As is stated in the preface, this fifth volume in the series of *Emerging Infections* is based primarily on presentations given at the 2000 Interscience Conference on Antimicrobial Agents and Chemotherapy in Toronto, Canada. The 14 chapters contain various topics ranging from short descriptions of outbreaks to extensive reviews. Some parts focus on clinical aspects, others are mainly microbiologically oriented.

The first two chapters discuss emerging viruses. The 1998 Taiwanese Enterovirus 71 epidemic describes the clinical picture (hand-foot-and-mouth disease, encephalitis and pulmonary manifestations) and molecular epidemiology. The 1999 West Nile Virus outbreak in New York City is highlighted from a public health point of view. The authors remind the reader that the presence of dead crows may be the first sign of an outbreak; this might also occur in Europe.

The reviews on Q-fever and *Mycoplasma pneumoniae* are excellent. Especially informative are the sections on the chronic form of Q-fever and the extrapulmonary complications of *M. pneumoniae* infections. The parts on *Staphylococcus aureus* and *Clostridium difficile* show that well-known pathogens are able to transfer into more pathogenic species. For example, the emergence of community-acquired oxacillin-resistant *S. aureus* (ORSA) is a problem in the USA. One chapter deals with infections in patients on haemodialysis due to the close contact of water with the patient's bloodstream. The effects of contact with products of microorganisms (such as endotoxins and microcystins) leading to acute disease and mortality are probably underestimated in daily practice.

An interesting chapter is the one on Buruli ulcer disease caused by *Mycobacterium ulcerans*, the third most common mycobacterial disease among immunocompetent people in the tropical world. A great deal of research remains to be done to understand this destructive disease. It is a well written and balanced chapter dealing with the clinical features and microbiological background.

Lyme disease-like illnesses and non-Lyme disease erythema migrans have recently been discovered and may be caused by other *Borrelia* species than *B. burgdorferi*. Vaccination is only mentioned in the discussion and it would have been preferable to describe this elsewhere in the chapter. The section on babesiosis, another tick-borne disease, teaches us that the expanding population with animal contact will result in more zoonoses.

Accurate laboratory-based tests to identify *Entamoeba histolytica* from the nonpathogenic *E. dispar* have improved the diagnosis of amebiasis. Due to changing travel behaviour amebiasis may well be an emerging infection. It would have been appropriate to mention the treatment strategies for this disease.

The exciting chapters on bioterrorism, a hot topic and a real threat according to the American authors, describe the clinical symptoms of anthrax and plague that may be of use to recognise an attack in an early stage. The list of possible agents that could be used as a weapon is also illustrative.

Emerging Infections 5 is easy to read, discussing a large number of different pathogens and illnesses occurring in the developing and developed world. It is interesting for clinicians who want to broaden their knowledge on emerging infections and microbiological techniques. And the clinical parts and public health subjects will be of use for microbiologists to get a picture of what is currently happening in the field of infectious diseases.

I am looking forward to reading *Emerging Infections 6*.