

Sexually Transmitted Infections, Second Edition

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ISBN: 8131228096

Published by Elsevier India, 2011

This edition is a valuable addition to general textbooks relating to sexually transmissible infections (STIs) and is a valuable addition in both resource-rich and -limited clinical environments. It is well presented and logically set out. Colour coding of the sections allows for rapid movement between sections and increases speed of access to relevant information in a clinical setting. The presence of summary boxes at the end of some of the chapters gives a brief overview of key concepts presented and would be helpful for clinicians new to the area of study.

Sections 1, 2, 3 and 4 on the history, epidemiology, prevention and control, and public health aspects of STI control give a firm theoretical basis for sexual health medicine. The chapters are of variable standard in presentation but collectively give a sense of the community impact as well as the individual impact of STIs. The chapter on surveillance clearly outlines the importance as well as the strengths and weaknesses of different forms of surveillance. One area that could be included in these sections would be a detailed discussion on partner notification processes.

Section 5 on basic and laboratory sciences is an unusual combination of topics and could have been presented as two sections, one on basic anatomy and one on laboratory and testing issues. Moving from basic history taking to mucosal immunity to laboratory diagnosis was confusing. Each chapter is well presented but lacks continuity.

Sections 6, 7 and 8 follow the standard format of viral, bacterial and fungal, protozoa and arthropod headings. The section on human papillomavirus (HPV) gave little emphasis to the potential role of currently available preventative vaccines and those in the pipeline. Also missing was a review of the role of HPV screening – both by cytology and gene probe – and how these screening methods can be used clinically and the impact that is likely from vaccine interventions. The section on viral hepatitis was well written and gave a good overview on management. The discussion on hepatitis C could have been expanded to further discuss the epidemiology and mechanisms of sexual transmission and included the impact that may occur as newer therapies become available. A full chapter on Epstein Barr virus in a STI textbook, given the stated lack of evidence of direct sexual transmission, was an interesting but perplexing addition.

Section 7 on bacterial STIs was well presented and comprehensive. The chapter on endemic treponematoses could have been put in as a summary and in a discussion on treponemal serology. Section 8 begins with a chapter on genital candidal infections. It is unclear as to what weight sexual transmission is given in this chapter.

Section 9 covers the syndromic approach to management of STIs in resource limited environments especially. Clinical algorithms are clearly presented and are a valuable source of information on which to base clinical decision making.

Section 10 on genital dermatology and genital pain syndromes, although not exclusively related to STIs, was well presented. The chapter on male genital pain syndromes gave a thorough overview of an often neglected topic.

Section 11 on sexually transmissible syndromes and other organs placed together aspects of STIs that frequently get relegated to minor paragraphs within text on individual diseases. Both chapters were thorough and well presented.

Section 12 on HIV infection was comprehensive and could stand alone as a separate text on the topic.

Section 13 covers STIs in special populations. A comprehensive chapter on congenital syphilis focussed on a disease rather than a population and could have been sited with the general chapter on syphilis. A chapter of aging, sexual behaviour and HIV/STI was a welcome inclusion in a standard textbook. The over 50s are an increasingly represented group in both sexual health and HIV medicine. The chapter on the sex worker community focussed only on female workers and discussed capacity building and governance of service delivery rather than STI patterns in this group. A discussion on the role of travel and migration in this cohort would have added a wider perspective.

The chapter on sexual assault looked at social, forensic and screening aspects of assault. Screening protocols were given for male offenders and female victims but not for female offenders and male victims. Extension of this section to include the effects of torture and assault during armed conflicts would have covered an area being increasingly seen within refugee sexual health services. A further chapter on sexual assault in children in Section 14 would have been placed more logically in this section. The chapter on sexual health in migrant populations is an excellent overview of what is an emerging field of study in sexual health, gender studies and political science.

Section 14 gives an overview on issues of sexuality, sexual orientation, education and sexual dysfunction. It provides a good starting point for examination of the issues and highlights cultural issues that impact on sexual health in different communities. Section 15 (Miscellaneous) contains some excellent information that could be sited mostly within other sections. The chapter on genital neoplasia is at risk of not being seen in this section and provided valuable information on HPV-related malignancies. Finally, Section 16 gives space for various guidelines to be put together in a readily available and useful format.

Overall, this textbook is a valuable contribution to the field of sexual health. The regional perspective enlarges understanding of STIs not only in the clinical but also in the societal, cultural and religious lives of our patients.

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