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# Book Reviews

*Control of Disease Vectors in the Community*. C. F. Curtis, ed. Pp. 233. Wolfe Publishing; 1991. £29.50.

Apart from the title page, this book is identical in content and pagination to one published in hardback in 1990 by CRC Press under the title *Appropriate Technology in Vector Control*, although the reader will find no mention of this title on the copyright page. Considering that the original was priced at around £130, its re-issue in paperback at a price affordable by *individuals* and by institutions in developing countries is most welcome. Knowing the personal commitment of the editor to the precepts of appropriate technology, one feels sure that the irony of the price of the original would not have escaped him.

The book is unique in its concern with the control of insect and tick vectors of human disease by techniques that communities in developing countries can manage with minimal outside help. There are 13 chapters, all but 3 of which have several authors. Following a brief introduction in which the editor explains what appropriate technology means in this context and why it is needed (a reflection of the original title of this volume), there follows the longest chapter of the book, a 24-author review of the use of impregnated bed nets and curtains against malaria vectors. Impregnated nets essentially act as mosquito traps baited with human odour. In a number of recent trials they have achieved a dramatic impact on malaria morbidity and in some cases malaria mortality in children has been substantially reduced. In view of the current problems of resistance to anti-malarial drugs and the somewhat distant prospect of a global malaria vaccine, impregnated nets are likely to play an increasingly important role in malaria control. There is even a risk that malaria control will come to rely too heavily on this single technique. This chapter will probably be the most widely consulted and quoted of the book.

Subsequent chapters review the highly successful use of baits to control tsetse flies, natural and synthetic insect repellents, new approaches to tick control, and a variety of environmental and biological methods of control. A chapter entitled 'Genetic control by trapping' is really an account of the use of sound to attract mosquitoes to traps together with a brief review of some tsetse trapping methods. The separation of this section on tsetse from the earlier chapter devoted to bait methods for tsetse control is inappropriate.

The role of improved housing in vector control receives deserved attention in a chapter that finishes with an examination of the constraints to improved low-cost housing. The authors conclude that house improvement on a large scale is difficult to justify on the basis of disease control alone, to which one might retort that 'appropriate' should mean small scale and that attempts at integrated disease control in the tropics that ignore housing improvement are unlikely to achieve long-term success.

A final chapter by Carol MacCormack looks at control through primary health care. I have to confess that I first approached this chapter with some trepidation, for often primary health care has appeared to be a sub-set of dialectic, if not dialectical materialism. However, this is in some ways the most thoughtful chapter of the book and one that is firmly grounded in the important practical problems that influence success in health programmes. In considering the key issue of sustainability, MacCormack argues cogently that success is more likely where control is linked to some local income generating scheme, for example tailoring or impregnating bed nets, and where there is a proper ratio between costs and perceived benefits. A crucial point made by her is that much of the literature on community participation relates to pilot schemes. These often succeed because they are driven by an idealistic and charismatic figure. When the scheme is scaled up, the charismatic leader is replaced by a bureaucrat and enthusiasm and efficiency decline.

This then is the real test of appropriate technology in vector control, where methods of proven effectiveness are put into routine use and responsibility is largely devolved to communities. This book will be invaluable to those concerned with improving vector control in developing countries. If they can deploy its techniques and methodologies, and at the same time heed the

message of its final chapter, then maybe appropriate technology will succeed where traditional vertical programmes of vector control have failed.

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*Human Toxoplasmosis*. DARREL O. HO-YEN, ALEX W. L. JOSS, eds. Pp. 265. Oxford University Press; 1992. £27.50.

Toxoplasmosis has featured prominently in the lay and scientific press over recent years, most notably in the continuing debate over the desirability of antenatal screening. The authors have detected a need for a detailed reference on the subject and produced a book to try and meet this demand. The work comprises a series of chapters considering different aspects of the parasite and related illness which include the history of the subject, clinical features, diagnosis and management as well as specific sections addressing infection of the immune suppressed and congenital toxoplasmosis. Each chapter ends with a concise summary and includes an extensive list of references.

All the authors are affiliated to a single institute, the Scottish Toxoplasma Reference Laboratory. This restricted input has produced a consistency of style and lack of repetition unusual in a multi-author text. The quality of the various chapters reflects the experience of the host unit; sections on diagnostics and pregnancy are detailed and comprehensive but consideration of infection in the immunocompromised is more superficial. Antenatal screening received a favourable review but the pertinent arguments against are presented.

Interestingly, a chapter on future developments predicts the development of an effective vaccine will remove the need for antenatal screening. The challenge of any work of this nature is to maintain clinical perspective in the face of a massive literature. This has been achieved in an admirable chapter on clinical features but in some sections the sheer mass of reported data may overwhelm all but the most committed reader.

Nonetheless, the book is the most complete account of toxoplasmosis available in a single text. It will be an invaluable source of information to medical practitioners and other staff dealing with toxoplasma infection.

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