Sexually Transmitted Infections CD-ROM
In the series 'Topics in International Health', 2nd ed.; CABI Publishing, £20–£120 (tiered pricing)

In the current era of HIV and AIDS it is easy to forget the global burden of potentially curable sexually transmitted infection. Three hundred and forty million new cases occur every year with 75% presenting in developing countries. There are 12 million cases of syphilis per year and up to one in eight young women in poorer countries is infected with genital Chlamydia trachomatis. It is therefore vital that healthcare workers have access to up-to-date and well presented information on their prevention and treatment. This CD aims to provide such information with particular emphasis on tropical and international health.

The CD is easy to load and is accompanied by a clear and concise instruction booklet which should help those readers who tend to lose themselves in the depths of web-style text. The content is divided into two main sections: interactive tutorials and an image gallery.

There are 18 interactive tutorials, each containing 40 to 50 slides. The tutorial structure is outlined in a contents list followed by specific learning objectives and each tutorial ends with a self-assessment exercise with links back to relevant revision points.

There are over-arching tutorials, such as general epidemiology, history taking and examination, tutorials on the sexually transmitted syndromes such as urethral discharge and pelvic inflammatory disease and finally pathogen-specific topics, for example syphilis and gonorrhoea. All pages display direct links to a glossary of terms with a clear route back into the tutorial. There are interactive text words and areas providing more detailed information, usually in drop-down format. Each tutorial has suggestions for further reading, including pertinent websites.

The CD aims itself at a world-wide readership and contains helpful advice for those working in resource-poor areas. The material acknowledges the limitations placed on those managing infections with little laboratory backup and emphasises the importance of syndromic management in the developing world. Particular prominence is given to WHO guidance with concise summaries in the form of well designed flow charts. Tropical conditions such as chancroid, Donovansis and lymphogranuloma venereum are described in detail with excellent illustrations of the relevant pathogens, which tend to be lacking in many standard texts. Although there is a chapter on the relationship between HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections there is not a chapter on HIV itself.

The image gallery contains 826 high quality pictures, which can be viewed in groups by specific diagnoses or by searching using keywords. Search results can be saved for future viewing.

It is difficult to criticise such a valuable resource although I would have liked to have seen some discussion of the sexual transmission of hepatitis B. More detail on some of the traditionally difficult areas of genito-urinary medicine would be welcome, for example prostatitis and epididymo-orchitis, proctitis, the diagnosis of neurosyphilis and the role of mycoplasmas and ureaplasmas in urethritis.

Given the CD's global perspective it would have been interesting to read an up-to-date account of the non-venereal treponematoses. Although the image gallery is huge some of the pictures are somewhat repetitive and serve simply to provide an illustrative background to the text rather than inform in their own right.

I enjoyed browsing through this CD and would recommend it to students, nurses or junior doctors who need an introduction to the subject of sexually transmitted infection with a clear commitment to looking at this group of diseases from an international perspective.

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Basic lymphoedema management: treatment and prevention of problems associated with lymphatic filariasis

The world of filariasis has been turned upside down with the discovery that the filaria responsible for this terrible disease are themselves infected with bacteria and that it is the immune response to these organisms that is responsible for much of the damaging inflammation. This brings the promise of new methods of controlling the disease and the deforming lymphoedema that occurs. This is, however, a hope for the future. Until the promise of this new research is fulfilled we must deal with those whose lives have been blighted by filariasis.

The authors have produced a book with a strong community involvement focus and the appendix includes an example of a patient education pamphlet. The book is very well illustrated with both diagrams and colour figures throughout. The first two chapters provide a basic introduction explaining the disease, its control and lymphatic complications. The reader is then taken through the process of assessing a patient, managing acute and chronic disease and urogenital complications. It provides practical advice and exercises for patients described in the text, with well drawn cartoons. There are tips to improve patient symptoms and well being (including for example, the advice that painting toe nails is not harmful and improves patient self esteem). It provides advice to help carers in diagnosis and management, for example, to differentiate between bacterial and fungal infection. Practical clinical procedures are carefully explained and illustrated in diagrams and colour figures.

This book is a treasure chest of practical advice for those who are involved in filariasis care and will be of considerable value for those who have to cope regularly with patients with chronic lymphoedema. Many of the readers of this journal will, perhaps, only see lymphoedema patients rarely. This book will be of particular value to such readers as it will provide a sound starting point for clinical care and thus is strongly recommended.

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