

Book Review

Tropical Diseases in Travelers

Eli Schwartz, Wiley-Blackwell
(2009, 485 pp. Hardcover. Price: US\$159)

This is the first travel medicine book I have encountered devoted exclusively to the post-travel patient encounter. While its price seems somewhat high, in this reviewer's opinion, it is well worth the investment for several reasons. Writing in the foreword, Alan Magill-current president of the International Society of Travel Medicine (ISTM)-states: 'Travel medicine is a relatively new discipline that has focused on the pre-travel aspect of traveler needs. This new book is the first to summarize the knowledge of post-travel presentations in the otherwise non-immune and non-endemic population. With such focus, this book will be useful to all practitioners, including primary care and infectious disease clinicians, who encounter the post-travel patient.'

While Schwartz contributes to several of the chapters, he has recruited an impressive group of distinguished, well-known, and expert co-authors adding to the substantive value of the book. To me, the unique innovation in this work is the clinical/syndromic/evidence-based approach described by highly-experienced clinician-researchers. The book's three principal sections are, 1). Tropical diseases in travelers-general aspects, 2). Specific infections-29 in all, 3). Syndromic approach, seven symptom complexes described.

These are followed by two useful appendices: **A** drugs for parasitic infections, and **B** laboratory tests for tropical diseases. While not extensive, they are useful starting points for the busy clinician.

In the chapter on post-travel screening, the authors emphasize the importance of a structured history, including sexual encounters, and details of other activities and geographic regions visited. This deserves emphasis, as travel history is often neglected in clinical encounters. The chapter on Chikungunya is both current and concise, and is supported by excellent pictures and color plates (11.2/11.3).

The chapter on enterically transmitted hepatitis A and E gives an excellent discussion and comparison

of these two viral diseases. While there are highly effective vaccines for hepatitis A and B, there is none for hepatitis E, which has a high mortality rate in pregnancy. Incidence of hepatitis E in travelers appears to be quite low at this time. Egypt and India have the highest seroprevalence rates in endemic countries, while surveys of blood donors in industrialized countries show rates of less than 0.5% in the Netherlands and up to almost 4% in New Zealand.

Long-standing problems, such as typhoid, malaria, and rabies are also given excellent coverage.

The chapter on Neurological signs and symptoms in travelers exemplifies the syndromic approach (e.g. Headache, fever, and CSF eosinophilia). How many clinicians immediately think of *Angiostrongylus* (Angiostrongylus cantonesis)? The accompanying table is an excellent quick-view reminder.

The color plates, while not exhaustive, are well chosen and clear (e.g., Chikungunya mentioned above, and plates 18.1-18.4 on African tick bite fever).

In his closing remarks, Schwartz re-emphasizes the importance to providers of being able to recognize 'imported' tropical diseases, especially serious and life threatening ones. This is true not only for Western providers, but also for those in transitional/developing countries globally.

This book is also important for other reasons. It teaches that many diseases thought to be 'local' can indeed be 'global' (e.g. histoplasmosis is not limited to the Midwestern USA, as I was once taught in medical school years ago!). It is focused on recent developments as well as old friends, such as typhoid and malaria. It has high value/cost appeal and should be on the bookshelf of all institutions which see significant numbers of returning travelers with health problems (e.g. Geo-Sentinel contributors). Finally, it gives a print alternative and complements to other highly valued resources, such as GIDEON® (www.gideononline.com).

The book's binding appears sturdy, and the book's organization has been carefully thought out. The price may seem high, but the ability to provide the busy clinician with access to needed information quickly makes it most attractive. We should look forward to future editions.

Robert E. Dedmon

*Department of Population Health, Medical
College of Wisconsin, Milwaukee 53226, USA*

(Correspondence to: Robert E. Dedmon, MD
MPH FACP FACOEM. 333 Park Drive, Neenah
Wisconsin 54956-2875, USA. E-mail: drbobred@
aol.com)