

Book Review

Tuberculosis, Sharma SK, editor. 2nd ed. (Jaypee Brothers Medical Publishers (P) Ltd., New Delhi). 2009. 1052 pages. Price: not mentioned. ISBN 978-81-8448-514-1

Tuberculosis is an ancient disease. Mankind has been fighting tuberculosis for at least two millennia and despite the considerable advances in the medical field in general, and specifically in tuberculosis research and management strategies, it continues to be the disease with the highest morbidity and mortality among the communicable diseases globally, with India contributing a substantial share. Tuberculosis research in India has played a key role in the global efforts to contain tuberculosis as has been aptly highlighted by the editor of this book.

The Second edition of the book "Tuberculosis", is the culmination of the continuing efforts of the editor to bring together the contributions of 112 scientists (68 in the first edition), carefully selected from all parts of the world on the basis of their expertise in their chosen areas. The chapters of the first edition in 2001 have been revised, re-written and updated and new chapters have been included. The result is a book containing the latest information on the aetiology, bacteriology, pathology, diagnostics, epidemiology, clinical aspects, treatment and organization of model TB Country Programme. The book is a rich and valuable source of information useful for planning strategies for elimination of tuberculosis globally. This edition has 67 chapters having 10 more chapters added in comparison to the first edition, and it provides a global perspective of TB.

The disease has undergone sea changes in its course through centuries. The chapters on epidemiology clearly bring out the transition from epidemic state to an endemic state over the centuries, the considerable

reduction in morbidity and mortality, reduction in cases of acute progressive tuberculosis and an almost steady state of co-existence between the host and the bacterium in over 30 per cent of the global population in the form of latent symptomatic infection and with re-activation in only about 10 per cent of the infected population over a life time to progress slowly to manifest as chronic tuberculosis.

We have a variety of anti-tuberculosis drugs with the choice of employing them in appropriate combinations in different categories of patients. In earlier years, most countries employed inexpensive regimens for TB control with their limited financial resources. The regimes employed had a potential of curing about 80 per cent of treated cases, and under Programme conditions, provided only 30-50 per cent of cure rates. Such regimes had little impact on reduction in transmission of infection and are no longer acceptable now. Today, financial resources are less of a constraint to achieve a target of global elimination of tuberculosis with many donor countries contributing liberally towards tuberculosis control programme-DOTS - in many countries. Today's regimes are capable of achieving a cure rate of over 90 per cent. With many pharmaceutical companies providing drugs at low prices, DOTS has become a reality in most countries of the world. The book has highlighted the huge hurdles the strategy had to overcome over the years, develop the steps to monitor the programmers and modify and improvise the strategies continuously, based on experiences gained, and to set up newer targets and goals, with progression from DOTS to DOTS - Plus and in preparing for prevention, identification and management of XDR (extensively drug resistant) tuberculosis.

Will the world be able to meet the target of elimination of tuberculosis by 2050? With the

determination of the National and International agencies' improved control programmes, and the speed with which newer control strategies are evolved, formulated and implemented, the prospects of achieving elimination are brighter.

Currently vaccination with BCG has not contributed significantly to TB control. The book has highlighted the current efforts to develop newer effective vaccines. The availability of an effective vaccine would speed up TB elimination since a successful vaccination programme would result in the reduction in the size of the infected pool from which cases occur due to re-activation.

The book is an authoritative source of up to date information on all aspects of tuberculosis, including control. It is profusely illustrated with colourful pictures and graphs. It is a source of useful and necessary information to all categories of health care personnel and researchers involved in the fight against tuberculosis. The editor deserves congratulations and gratitude of the scientific fraternity for his efforts which gave us such a highly informative and useful book.

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