
Preface

Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), previously known as venereal diseases, have been a topic of major concern for centuries as they are considered very important risk factors for morbidity and mortality both in poor and in industrialised countries.

Great steps have been made during the last two centuries to combat STDs. The introduction of penicillin was a major breakthrough in the treatment of syphilis. In the late twentieth century HIV was documented as the cause of AIDS, and the association between genotypes of HPV and genitoanal cancer was documented. These events paved the way to the production of many classes of antiretroviral drugs and to the development of prophylactic HPV vaccines.

We now have a far better understanding of numerous sexually transmitted infections. Recent developments in diagnostic techniques not only have permitted more accurate diagnosis but also have widely improved our understanding of the natural history of STDs. It is only through such understanding that the feasibility of specific therapies and preventive methods can be determined, but much remains to be learned regarding STDs.

When planning this text an important consideration was to identify the audience to whom it is directed. It should be of value to the widest audience of physicians and scientists interested in sexually transmitted infections and STDs. However it is not intended only for clinicians and laboratory scientists. It is not a compendium of diseases and information about how they should be treated. Rather it attempts a synthesis of these areas, discussing the clinical, diagnostic, epidemiologic, pharmacologic, molecular biologic and immunologic interrelationships of pathogenic agents, antibiotics, antifungals, antivirals and disease.

The book is intended for those who will most need it in the coming years: the medical student and resident who are interested in infectious diseases, the clinician who diagnoses and treats STDs and the microbiologist who will advance new developments in the field.

We hope that the text will be of interest to readers who are concerned in any way with patients suffering from STDs and associated public health problems, e.g. physicians, nurses, counsellors, students, laboratory personnel, public health workers and politicians. It is also intended for the research scientist who hopefully will be encouraged to do further work in the field of STDs and sexually transmitted infections.

In order to reach such a wide and diverse audience, all aspects of sexually transmitted infections and STDs are covered in this text. We are grateful to the contributors from all parts of the world with their different backgrounds and recognised expertise compiling this manifold book.

There are many instances of overlap in the book, but this is not considered to be undesirable. In many instances it is done for completeness and emphasis. The reader will notice that the individual chapters vary somewhat in terms of length, organization and style. These variations arise from the differing natures of the topics being discussed. We have decided to maintain these differences, since the state of the art varies widely from one area to another.

This book not only covers diagnosis and treatment, but also emphasizes prevention. Education is the cornerstone of prevention and is the goal of this book. Recently the first vaccines to prevent STDs, i.e. for hepatitis B and HPVs, have been added to the list of preventative interventions ranging from condoms to abstinence. It is anticipated that vaccines to prevent other STDs will be added to this list in the future. Education regarding both prevention and treatment should result in better control of STDs. We hope that the book will contribute to increased awareness and knowledge of sexually transmitted infections and STDs emphasizing their important role in human medicine.

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Prof. Dr. Gerd Gross
Director Department of Dermatology and
Venereology, Medical School,
University of Rostock, Germany, 1996-today.
President, German STD-Society 1998-2010
Vice President, Paul-Ehrlich-Society 2008-2010
Honorary Member or fellow of corresponding
societies of dermato-venereology in Poland,
Hungary and Chile and of the Baltic
Association of Dermatovenereology (BADV)

Stephen K. Tying, MD, PhD
Clinical Professor of Dermatology,
Microbiology/Molecular Genetics and
Internal Medicine University of Texas Health Science
Center Houston, Texas USA

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Gross, G.; Tying, S.K. (Eds.)

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