

# Preface

Healthcare-associated infections (HAIs) are an increasing problem worldwide and need to be addressed urgently. In the European Union, about 7% of patients in acute care hospitals experience HAIs; recent analysis discloses an even higher prevalence in developing countries. The international contributors to this book, in drawing on their considerable experience in different settings, perform an important function by clarifying the main issues for tackling HAIs. Their assessment necessarily covers both the characteristics of the principal pathogens and the key organisational and operational factors implicated for hospitals and their staff. This detailed analysis is accompanied by discussion of best practice for preventing and managing the challenges presented by HAIs. I welcome the emerging perspective from this book that emphasises that the options for antibiotic policy must cover a broad range of activities. There are policy issues to face for surveillance, for prudent and responsible prescribing, for developing and implementing guidelines for infection control, and for raising awareness of the threat of HAIs throughout the medical profession and with patients.

The present volume is very valuable in communicating strong messages concerning the nature of the burden to individuals and to health systems, but also about the opportunities for change to improve patient safety. From my own experience with Academies of Science across Europe (who, as the European Academies Science Advisory Council, have also reported on some of these issues, [www.easac.eu](http://www.easac.eu)), I know that there is still much to be done to engage with decision-makers at all levels about these matters.

I am also convinced that there is an urgent requirement to increase collective commitment to biomedical research and innovation because otherwise the longer-term battle against HAIs and associated antibiotic resistance will be lost. We need this research—integrating epidemiology, social and biomedical sciences—so that we can better understand the behaviour of both microbial and human populations. Moreover, we need to become more adept in translating the research advances into faster development of novel, improved, diagnostics and therapeutics and their use in new and better ways.

To be effective, therefore, public health policy for the use of those antimicrobial agents presently available to us must be well coordinated with innovation policy.

In addition, strategy for human health must be aligned coherently with strategy for veterinary health. The common element in developing all of these policies is the reliance on robust, validated evidence. Taken together, the individual contributors in this book, assembled by insightful editors, play a vital role in collating that definitive evidence and assessing its implications, notwithstanding the inevitable uncertainties occasioned by the rapid pace of change in burden of infection and the varying experience in different countries. This book serves a twin purpose in helping to construct a more informed evidence base for coherent policy making while, at the same time, providing practical advice for health professionals in the prevention and control of HAIs.

Volker ter Meulen  
Past president of European Academies Scientific Advisory Council (EASAC)  
Past president of the Leopoldina

Antibiotic Policies

Controlling Hospital Acquired Infection

Gould, I.M.; van der Meer, J.W.M. (Eds.)

2012, XIII, 209 p., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-1-4419-1733-1