Books International health links manual

The Tropical Health and Education Trust's International Health Links Manual is a well written and detailed guide on how to establish collaborative development partnerships between health-sector organisations in the UK and counterparts in developing countries. Although the focus is on partnerships with UK-based organisations, the general principles are valid for organisations in other parts of the world who wish to embark on similar partnerships.

I found the book well structured, user-friendly, and easy to read. The use of case studies and examples illustrating people's experiences whether best practice, short-comings, or perceptions brings a useful notion of reality into context. The use of symbols within the text alerts the reader to interesting facts and provides references to books, internet sites, and journals. Each section ends with a summary of key points that serve as take home messages.

Over the past years, there have been countless efforts made towards developing partnerships between developed and developing nations that often fail or end up being of limited benefit to one side or the other or both. The basic problem lies in the manner in which these links are conceived and managed. In this vein, there is very limited information in the published work on how to follow a strategic approach to avoid this problem. When partnerships are being built between people with different cultures, ways of thinking, and professional priorities, knowing how to sail a health link partnership through both good and difficult waters is vital. This book contributes to filling that gap. The first section of the book provides an overview of what links are, what their purpose is, and the broad guiding principles upon which they are based. The second section focuses on the practical aspects: creating a link, setting objectives, setting up monitoring and evaluation, coordinating the link, organising exchange visits, building up the work, tackling barriers, and finally ending a link. The third section with appendices gives useful templates such as drafting a memorandum of understanding, writing an activity report, or mapping donors.

Developing effective and sustained health sector partnership links is at present invaluable for Africa where there is currently a serious shortage of health workers both in terms of quantity and quality. Such links can contribute to the strengthening of health systems by improving health worker motivation and building capacity through relevant training and curriculum development. Other potential opportunities include enhancing health systems research, increasing international awareness, solidarity on problems facing health workers and patients, and advocating for policy change.

This manual would be useful for health professionals, managers, policy makers, academic and training institutions, health trusts, donor agencies, and nongovernmental agencies involved with developing collaborative partnership links with developing countries.

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International Health Links Manual, 2nd edn By Maïa Gedde. THET, 2009. Pp 146. £17·00. ISBN 978-0956094216

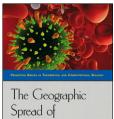
The geographic spread of infectious diseases

The spread of disease throughout cities, countries, and the world relies on the spatial nature of transmission. Urban cities might face very different effects to rural communities, depending on the nature of the disease. Infections might cluster or they might move rapidly through modern transportation networks. At a smaller scale, an individual's social and travel networks might cause them to encounter infected individuals in a variety of ways.

At the same time, mathematical modelling of infectious diseases has been steadily growing in stature. Recent successes in dealing with severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), measles, and river blindness have shown that mathematical models can be useful, accurate, and predictive. *The Geographic Spread of Infectious Diseases: Models and Applications* surveys the role that mathematical models have had—and will continue to have—in monitoring, understanding, and containing the spread of disease, with an explicit focus on spatial spread.

Interestingly, the book is written by a non-mathematician (albeit with a cocredited mathematician), which presents a fresh perspective into the specialty. Mathematical modelling is sometimes offputting, but does not need to be. This outside-in perspective is a healthy one, although occasionally contains a few errors, such as the formulation of the basic reproduction number on page 21.

The survey is reasonably thorough, although at times a little dry; more focus on case studies would have illustrated the themes much better. The one that does work, and magnificently, is the postmortem of the 2001 UK foot and mouth disease (FMD) outbreak, where mathematical models famously did substantial damage. The book deconstructs the process, from the hurried attempt to create simplistic models and decisions based more on politics than health concerns to the legitimate criticisms that were levelled after the fact. This makes for fascinating reading, although the punctuation choices are a little odd: the book writes "U.K. FMD", complete



Infectious Diseases

LISA SATTENSPIEL

The Geographic Spread of Infectious Diseases: Models and Applications By Lisa Sattenspiel. Princeton University Press, 2009. Pp 304. £34-95. ISBN 978-0-691-12132-1 with inconsistent use of full stops, over and over again (eg, page 179). Who thought this was a good idea?

Sexually transmitted diseases are considered only briefly, and then only as motivation, which is a shame. More details of the relation between geography and sexually transmitted diseases would have rounded out the material nicely. Instead, the focus is largely on respiratory diseases, especially SARS—although the claim that delayed interhemisphere epidemics would not be likely today (page 68) has the dubious distinction of being disproved before the book actually came out, thanks to the persistence of pandemic H1N1 influenza in the southern hemisphere and looming threat in the north. This book considers a variety of approaches to spatial modelling of disease, from metapopulation models and networks to geographical information system mapping and partial differential equations. Primary focus is given to influenza, SARS, measles, and FMD. The book's greatest strength is its outsider's wonderment at the power of mathematical modelling. Its greatest weakness is that, in an effort to do the specialty justice, it keeps things slightly too abstract. However, it is worth the cover price for the FMD chapter alone.

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Red book 2009

2009 Red Book: Report of the Committee on Infectious Diseases, 28th edn Edited by Larry K Pickering. America Academy of Pediatrics, 2009. Pp 984. US\$114-95. ISBN 978-1-58110-306-9. http:// www.aapredbook.org The Red Book of the American Academy of Pediatrics has grown in size and scope from the first edition in 1938 to the twenty-eighth edition in 2009. It is an impressive reference text, with 984 pages and a list of contributors comparable to a North American Who's Who in the specialty of paediatric infectious diseases. In addition to the presentation, diagnosis, treatment, and control of specific infections, the book also has sections on antimicrobial treatment, prophylaxis, vaccination, and recommendations for care of children under special circumstances. This last section is among the most useful and interesting, because it condenses a host of issues that infrequently arise in paediatric practice, ranging from discarded needle stick injuries in the community, through evaluating children adopted from abroad, to possible exposure to biological terrorism.

Those considering updating from previous editions can see for themselves what has been changed by visiting the *Red Book* website under the section entitled "Summary of Major Changes". Highlights include expanded chapters on herpes simplex, HIV, influenza, pneumococcus, and respiratory syncytial virus, and new chapters on human bocavirus and polyomaviruses.

The content of the book is based on information available in January, 2009, but the editors have insured that up to date information continues to be available to readers. Many of the sections refer to external websites that contain regularly updated information and the website for the *Red Book* itself contains errata and new recommendations. Other strengths of the book include the comprehensive index, concise writing style, and its sheer authority; among the contributors were representatives from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Food and Drug Administration, the National Institutes of Health, the National Vaccine Program Office, the Canadian Paediatric Society, and the American Thoracic Society.

Nonetheless, there are limitations to the book that might disappoint some readers. For example, there is a surprising paucity of information on health-careassociated infections. Gram-negative environmental pathogens such as pseudomonas and acinetobacter receive no additional attention. Given that these organisms can cause substantial morbidity and mortality in children that have been admitted to hospital and, in an era of progressive antimicrobial resistance, can be exceptionally hard to treat, the absence of a section on the presentation and management of health-care-associated infections is perhaps the greatest weakness of the book. Other limitations include the unwavering focus on North American diseases and practice, as well as the lack of comprehensive citation. Academics wishing to analyse the basis for the committee's recommendations might find this lack of references frustrating. However, the alternative would be a book twice the size, and the decision only to cite the most crucial references is understandable.

This book has a place on the shelf of all practitioners who care for children, whether the general practitioner, paediatrician, or specialist in infectious diseases, irrespective of which part of the world they practice in. It is an extremely well written, concise, and authoritative summary of paediatric infectious diseases.

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www.thelancet.com/infection Vol 10 March 2010