BOOKS RECEIVED

A Guide to Specimen Management in Clinical Microbiology


One of this author's earlier publications was the *Handbook of Specimen Collection and Handling, Centers for Disease Control, Atlanta*. The current volume's title may not inspire enthusiastic exploration of the contents, although sound advice is offered for those with responsibility for ordering tests and collecting specimens for microbiological examination. The important pre-analytical phase of clinical microbiology often receives less attention than it deserves and this guide addresses the subject in an informative and logical way.

The inclusion of 'laboratorians' as a group of staff for whom the book is intended indicates the trans-Atlantic origin of the work. Apart from emphasis on some organisms more commonly encountered in the USA, and reference to US statutory requirements, the text is as valid in Britain as North America.

The book is divided into four sections. Initially, there is communicating laboratory needs, which includes specimen selection, requisition, packaging, transport prior to submission, prioritisation, rejection criteria and reporting. Secondly, the specimen management policies and rationale section provides an overview of guidelines for the broad groups of specimens. The third and major section of the book has detailed instructions for collection and processing of specific specimens, and the work concludes with tables which summarise the salient information.

The necessity for laboratory accreditation in North America has long been instrumental in encouraging the publication of handbook, policy and procedure guidelines. Now that Clinical Pathology Accreditation is firmly established in Britain, additions to the relevant accumulated literature are welcome. This book will prove helpful to all microbiology laboratory staff writing or reviewing their procedures relating to specimen collection and handling, as it provides a comprehensive checklist of the requirements.

The author's intention is to direct this work to all members of the health care team, but one suspects that it is least likely to be read by those whom might gain most benefit, namely the requestors of microbiology investigations and the collectors of appropriate and timely specimens. As support for communicating pre-analytical needs to service users this book will be a useful addition to the laboratory library.

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