

## BOOK REVIEW

### **The AIDS Booklet**

by Frank D. Cox

McGraw-Hill

6th Edition 2000

Starting in 1989, McGraw-Hill in conjunction with Frank D. Cox of Santa Barbara City College has published the AIDS Booklet updating the public on the latest concepts and statistics regarding the AIDS epidemic. Now in the year 2000 the 6th booklet has appeared and as in earlier editions it is dedicated to Jack W. Shields, M.D. a founding member of the ISL who "recognized early on the danger of AIDS to both the individual and the culture as a whole." [and who] "sooner than most people saw the need to mount an all out war against this destructive new disease." Now a retired hematologist from Santa Barbara Cottage Hospital, Dr. Shields describes in a short forward to the booklet the dynamics of the 25 trillion lymphocytes that circulate throughout the body. He emphasizes that when these lymphocytes, large or small, are largely destroyed the end result is weight loss, emaciation, occult cancer and ultimately death from atypical infections. This sequence of events is what happens when HIV fouls up the genetic machinery to produce the AIDS syndrome. As AIDS spreads via infected lymphocytes in blood, semen, uterine cervical secretions, saliva and maternal colostrum via breast feeding the worst communicable disease in modern times has spread across the globe.

In a logical fashion the Booklet starts with an updated (1999) list from The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) documenting

almost 700,000 cases of AIDS in the USA and then continues with the latest trends and updates on drug treatment, epidemiology, cost of drugs and multiple world-wide issues in dealing with the epidemic.

An early chapter deals with an overview of HIV/AIDS including a brief history in America, a self-test (true or false) about many of the most commonly asked questions and concerns regarding the pathogenesis as currently understood from prodrome, latency, lymph glandular enlargement to frank AIDS illustrated by scanning electron microscopy (SEM) of lymphocytes with and without infection by HIV.

Another chapter focuses on the full blown epidemic, the numbers (~9 million worldwide), a map of the USA demonstrating the relatively large incidence in big cities, large states and even a list of the major metropolitan areas as of January 1, 1999 documenting that virtually every urban community is afflicted with AIDS patients. Charts, tables, and narratives summarizes who are primarily afflicted, its economic impact and the effect on women and children.

A subsequent chapter examines how one contracts HIV/AIDS including risk behavior such as drug abuse, blood transfusion, casual transmission including protection of health providers. Again, tables, graphs and even high power histopathology photomicrographs help illustrate for the reader current understanding of HIV transmission.

A later chapter details how one can prevent AIDS by adopting careful sexual behavior and activities, the value and shortcomings of male and female contraceptive

agents, avoidance of IV drug (ab)use, and the limitations of vaccines and drugs in this condition and even the impact of HIV/AIDS on the law.

The final pages of this 78 page soft pamphlet include a summary on preventing HIV dissemination, a CDC revised definition of AIDS, the costs of commonly used agents and lab tests for AIDS infected adults, a detailed schematic diagram in the life of the lymphocyte as a prelude to a technical description of HIV-1 sickness and transmission; key reference and a glossary of commonly used terms.

Whereas this Booklet is brief, it contains all that the casual reader or average physician-practitioner needs to know. Moreover, the text is easy to read, well organized, spiced with engaging photomicrographs, cartoons, tables, figures and contains lists on issues related to biology, law, costs and drug usage which are up to

date, factually reliable and complete as far as the knowledge of the day is concerned. I recommend it highly for the public and those interested in this infectious scourge of humankind as a legitimate summary of current understanding with a sensible emphasis on prevention. The only issue that leaves me perplexed is who the author Frank D. Cox really is, what degrees if any he holds and what is his relationship to AIDS and Dr. Shields and for that matter with the Santa Barbara Cottage Hospital.

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