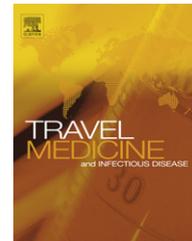


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## BOOK REVIEW

Chris R. Schull\*, *Common Medical Problems in the Tropics*, Third ed., Macmillan Education, London, UK, 2010, pp. xiv+629, with illus, soft cover, GBP20.30, ISBN 978-0230-03104-3.

Health professionals and students working in developing countries need access to a definitive low cost reference textbook that deals with common medical conditions encountered, including important tropical diseases. This Third Edition of *Common Medical Problems in the Tropics* has become one such reference work, which reflects the broad expertise, passion, personal investment and successful fundraising of its author, Dr Chris Schull, as recounted in the Foreword by Emeritus Professor David C. Morley from the University of London. The book contains Important notes about drugs and drug doses, a Foreword, a Preface to the First Edition, a Preface to the Second Edition, a Preface to the Third Edition, an Acknowledgements, 37 chapters, An Appendix, a section detailing Useful Publications, an Index, as well as numerous figures, photos, maps, tables and boxes. There is no glossary, although the second Chapter is devoted to providing definitions of terms and abbreviations. There is no list of tables and figures or references.

The chapter structure of the Third Edition of *Common Medical Problems in the Tropics* is very similar to that used in the first and second editions, although the book has progressively swelled by 86 and 102 pages respectively from each of these editions. Chapters include subjects include "On being an Effective Health Worker"; "Some Clinical Definitions"; "Pathology"; "A Classification of Disease-The Causes of Diseases"; "Epidemiology"; "Diagnosis of Disease"; "Treatment, Drugs and Pain Relief"; "Notification of Disease and Death"; "Control and Prevention of Disease, Summary of Patient Management"; "Infection, Immunity, Immunization and Allergy"; "Infectious Diseases, Chemotherapy and Universal Precautions"; "Septicemia and other Acute Severe Bacterial Infections, and HIV Infection"; "Malaria"; "Tuberculosis"; "Leprosy"; "Some Common Infectious Diseases"; "Some Serious Acute Infectious Diseases with Limited Distribution"; "Some Serious Subacute and Chronic Infectious Diseases with Limited Distribution"; "Sexually Transmitted Diseases including HIV Infection and AIDS"; "Disorders of the Respiratory System"; "Disorders of the Blood and the Blood Forming Organs"; "Disorders of the Lymphatic System and Spleen"; "Disorders of the Gastrointestinal System and Nutrition"; "Disorders of the Liver, Bile Ducts and Pancreas"; Disorders of the

Nervous System"; "Disorders of the Urinary System"; "Disorders of the Heart and Blood Vessels"; "Disorders of the Bones and Muscles"; Disorders of the Joints (Arthritis); "Disorders of the Endocrine Glands"; "Disorders of the Eye"; Disorders of the Skin"; "Bites and Stings"; "Poisoning and Drug Abuse"; "Psychiatric Conditions"; "Some Common Symptoms and Signs"; and "Emergency Resuscitation". The appendix gives incubation periods of some common infectious diseases, which is particularly useful for tropical and travel medicine practice.

A major strength of the Third Edition of *Common Medical Problems in the Tropics* is that it provides the basics of anatomy and physiology, pathology, and a guide to eliciting basic clinical signs and symptoms, which are usually given at the beginning of the "Disorders" chapters. This approach is supplemented with a generous number of detailed diagrams. This is very useful for the health professional or student in helping to understand what is normal and what is abnormal in terms of clinical findings. A particular feature includes the various practical "how to do it" guides, usually with detailed diagrams, on undertaking basic investigations, such as thick and thin films for malaria, sputum tests for acid fast bacilli, and skin biopsies for leprosy, as well as how to undertake procedures, such as intramuscular injections or how to use a flowmeter. While concentrating on the basics, the textbook is also comprehensive in its approach, whether assisting the reader to deal with emergency resuscitation and poisoning through to dealing with psychiatric disorders. Most of the limitations discussed in the review of the Second Edition have been addressed in this Third Edition.<sup>1</sup>

The author of each of the editions of *Common Medical Problems in the Tropics* is Chris Schull. He is a consultant physician and specialist in internal medicine. The First Edition was written in response to perceived needs for "appropriate training and reference material" (back cover), while he was working in Africa and rural Papua New Guinea. The work has gradually become more generalisable to developing countries globally with each successive edition. This addition was supported by a generous donation of the Australian Medical Association, Queensland Branch, Foundation. Dr Schull is currently a Senior Lecturer in the School of Medicine at the University of Queensland and a Consultant Physician in Thoracic and Sleep Medicine at the Greenslopes Private Hospital in Brisbane, Australia.

The target audience of the Third Edition of *Common Medical Problems in the Tropics* is intended to be senior

paramedical workers, such as clinical officers, health officers, medical assistants, health extension officers, senior nurses and others" (back cover), based on titles used in developing countries in the Western Pacific Region, such as Papua New Guinea. The book would also be a useful reference for health science students undertaking courses in tropical medicine. The textbook will continue to appeal more to those working in developing countries and remote locations than in major centers. Compact textbooks, such as the *Oxford Handbook of Tropical Medicine*,<sup>2</sup> will also be useful adjunct references.

The Third Edition of *Common Medical Problems in the Tropics* continues to be a useful step-by-step textbook informing health professionals and students concerning the diagnosis and management of clinical problems in the tropics. This single author work is reflected in the textbook's consistent style, such as the numerous bulleted summaries of conditions and procedures, which make a useful ready reference for approaching clinical problems. It continues to be a worthy addition to other low cost edition books produced through the Teaching Aids at Low Cost (TALC) program,<sup>3</sup> which helps to produce low cost textbooks through donations and sponsorship. The cost of the Third Edition (GBP7.00 through TALC) is similar to that of previous editions and is not excessive for health workers or students with limited means.

## Sources of funding

None.

## Competing interests

None.

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Peter A. Leggat\*  
James Cook University, School of Public Health,  
Tropical Medicine and Rehabilitation Sciences,  
Townsville QLD 4811, Australia

\* Tel.: +61 7 47816108; fax: +61 7 47815254.  
E-mail address: [peter.leggat@jcu.edu.au](mailto:peter.leggat@jcu.edu.au) July 2012