

## Microbiology Nuts & Bolts: Key Concepts of Microbiology & Infection

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CreateSpace, 2013.

ISBN-13: 978-1484123911, RRP £27.99, 288 pp.

There is certainly no shortage of books out there all vying for that prime real estate of a junior doctor's pocket. *Microbiology Nuts & Bolts: Key Concepts of Microbiology & Infection* enters this crowded market with an additional challenge: how to be useful in an era where each hospital Trust has antimicrobial guidelines that are not only easily available, but in many cases physically strapped to the doctor in the form of a crib card. In fact, I was pleasantly surprised by how useful this book turned out to be on the wards.

The first section covers the 'key concepts' advertised in the title, and provides some background theory in microbiology with a practical slant, for example discussing colonization versus infection in the context of interpreting culture results. It certainly served to deepen my understanding of both infection control and treatment, and collates a lot of material that I found surprisingly difficult to track down when a medical student. The book is peppered with asides in the form of boxed 'Hints and tips' or 'Myths', which, although undoubtedly informative, occasionally appear to take the tone of a somewhat exasperated microbiologist at the wrong end of a Friday evening bleep.

The bulk of the book is devoted to clinical scenarios, whereby the features, causes, investigation and treatment of infection are outlined system by system. This is also the area where the book goes up most directly against Trust guidelines, and therefore

is most useful in more unusual infections or presentations that don't fit the guidelines one has available (if you aren't just asked to speak with microbiology about the problem anyway). I could also envisage it being very handy in general practice where advice may be less readily at hand.

The final section, covering details of the antimicrobials themselves, was the element I found most useful as a quick reference. As a junior doctor, being able to check what monitoring is required for the more unusual antibiotics is extremely helpful. Likewise, the comprehensive table of dose adjustments in renal failure is very useful.

This book provides an impressively broad coverage of microbiology in theory and practice and I can see uses for it for students, junior doctors and general practitioners. In the *Proteus*-like swarm of handbooks this one has found its niche, and although it hasn't quite made it into my pocket it still has a place in my bag several weeks after I first picked it up.

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