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Rezension – Analyse – Review

Rabies in the Tropics. Edited by E. Kuwert, C. Mérieux, H. Koprowski, K. Bögel. Springer-Verlag, Berlin/Heidelberg 1985, XVIII, 786 p. (with 202 figures and 363 tables). ISBN 3-540-13826-9. DM 148.–.

This book presents more than 100 papers from a conference held in Tunis, October 3–6, 1983. The subject is: “Proceedings of an international conference on rabies control in the tropics”. The greater part of the book is in English; a few of the articles are in French. In seven sections the book presents a very detailed survey of current knowledge in the field of rabies and rabies related viruses, rabies vaccines in use in man and animal, especially in dogs, but also in other animal species; quality control of vaccines and the future of new rabies vaccines, and finally, epidemiology, control of rabies in animal and the role of medical and veterinary services in rabies elimination.

The first section discusses the latest advances in research on topics ranging from the basic molecular biology of the virus genome to aspects such as the results of changes in amino acid sequences. An important article demonstrates what far-reaching effects can be produced by small changes in living organisms; for example, a change in one amino acid can convert a harmless strain to a highly pathogenic one. Such work clearly needs to be very carefully supervised.

A large section describes rabies vaccines, their effectiveness and tolerance. Various methods of preparation and assays of effectiveness are presented extensively. An immense amount of extremely detailed work is clearly being done on these topics. There is already a wide range of vaccines available, and the question arises whether some of the time and money involved could be better invested in other aspects of control programmes.

The section on quality control discusses well-known methods like NIH, SRD, RIA and APT.

There is a very extensive description of the epidemiology of rabies in 28 countries on four continents. As might be expected, most of the rabies cases are reported from tropical countries and the disease was transmitted by dogs.

All in all, the book presented here is not only a conference report but an excellent review of our current knowledge about rabies, and it will certainly become a standard reference for rabies experts. In spite of the variations in the presentation of the articles, which is quite normal where there is such large-scale international collaboration, it will stimulate many medical and scientific workers to take more interest in the subject of rabies.

TH. WOLFF

Swiss Tropical Institute, Basel

