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BOOK REVIEW

Atlas of Human Malaria

Giovanni Swierczynski, Maria Gobbo. Az Color s.r.l., Sirmione, 2007. viii + 203 pp., hardback, ISBN: 978-88-902892-0-0 (€ 60)

The *Atlas of Human Malaria* is in an uncommon format, having a page size of 33 cm × 23 cm, which I personally found to be a little unwieldy for easy use as a reference book; however, this size does allow for excellent colour photomicrographs, size 14 cm × 9.5 cm, of which there are over 450 presented four to a page. There are 203 pages written in dual language, English and Italian, with the captions to the colour photomicrographs in English with the Italian versions in a chapter at the back of the book. There are also four tables and 11 plates included through the text with a useful list of suggested further reading as well as over 80 relevant references.

There is a very good introduction, with a section on the parasite and its developmental stages and an illustrated section on direct microscopy (interesting but of little value). There is a section on the effects of anticoagulants as well as illustrated sections on the preparation and staining of thin and thick films and of the effects of pH on the stain and parasitaemia counts on thin and thick films. The larger part of the Atlas is given to the excellent description of the four human malaria species, with nearly 400 colour photomicrographs showing every developmental stage of the four species in thin and thick blood films. Photomicrographs of mixed infections are also included, as are morphological changes due to anticoagulants, common artefacts that may be confused with malaria, and a small section on other blood parasites such as *Borrelia*, *Babesia* and microfilaria. The images are

of very high quality and by using multiple images of the different stages of each species the authors have been able to show the range in variation that may be seen in the morphology of each stage. This is something that inexperienced and not so inexperienced microscopists find particularly difficult when looking at malaria films and I think this is one of the great strengths of this Atlas.

I think that given the excellent quality of this Atlas and its surprisingly low cost, it should prove an invaluable guide to all those involved in the diagnosis of malaria by blood film examination as well as students, teachers and infectious disease doctors. I do hope that if the Atlas runs to a second edition the authors will be able to include the primate malaria *Plasmodium knowlesi*, as this appears to be rapidly becoming the fifth human malaria species in the Far East and images of the same high quality would greatly assist in its differentiation from *P. malariae* and *P. falciparum*.

The authors set out to provide a comprehensive handbook on the diagnosis of malaria by microscopy, whilst keeping the cost to a minimum. This they did by taking no remuneration for their work and by the publisher putting in a lot of the work for free. Additionally, a donation will be made to a malaria field project from every one sold. Did they achieve their goal? I think they most certainly did.

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