

clinicians and nonparasitologists who are interested in infectious diseases well informed about this important area.

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Medically Important Fungi: A Guide to Identification, 4th Edition

Davise H. Larone

Washington, D.C.: American Society
for Microbiology Press, 2002. 409 pp.,
illustrated. \$79.95 (cloth).

Despite the frustrations involved in the diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of fungal infections, virtually all infectious diseases specialists retain a fascination for fungi themselves. The beauty we observe while peering through a microscope at their hyphae, spores, conidia, and other exotic structures often rises to the level of an abstract art form. Since the appearance of the first edition in 1976, Davise Larone's *Medically Important Fungi: A Guide to Identification* has fed this fascination with a clarity and conciseness unmatched in the field of laboratory identification guides.

This fourth edition retains the focus of the original on the challenges faced by those in the clinical laboratory who must isolate, cultivate, and identify the diverse array of yeasts and molds that present themselves in medical practice. Dr. Larone makes no attempt to address the basic biology, pathogenesis, and clinical and therapeutic aspects of fungal diseases. These subjects are better left to the larger mycology and infectious diseases reference works, to which the author frequently directs the reader (including citation of relevant pages).

This book includes informative sections on specimen collection, culture media, and growth and staining procedures used with fungi, but its core is a 226-page section on the identification of fungi in cul-

ture. The primary approach is the pairing of concise narrative descriptions with the author's own line drawings on a single page for each species. The book's greatest strength is the style Dr. Larone developed in the third edition, in which a photomicrograph adjusted to the same scale as the line drawing is placed alongside the drawing. Anyone who has tried to identify fungi knows the main challenge is finding the diagnostic structures by focusing up and down while scanning through multiple microscopic fields. The idealized structures shown in the line drawings can be matched to the wet preparation (photomicrograph), which greatly enhances their usefulness. In this edition, Dr. Larone has extended this approach effectively to highlight the fungal component of histopathologic photomicrographs in a new section on interpretation of direct microscopic examinations. These pages will be of particular interest to pathologists and clinicians faced with the interpretation of diagnostic biopsies.

This fourth edition is fully updated, with the inclusion of new species and the renaming of old ones. If you somehow missed that *Cephalosporium* is now called *Acremonium*, you will find both old and new names clearly indicated on the primary page and in the index. There is also a generous new section of color plates, which have been used appropriately to illustrate aspects not shown in the black-and-white drawings and photographs that form the body of the book. These illustrations include images of mold colony morphology and biochemical reactions on indicator agars and selected photomicrographic images. The illustrated glossary brings all the major morphologic terms to life.

Perhaps the strongest recommendation for *Medically Important Fungi* came from a trip to the clinical mycology laboratory. There, the fourth edition was already in use on the workbench, and all the staff agreed that it was the best yet. They were especially enthusiastic about the change from paperback to hardcover, because this

saves them the rigors of preservation—the third edition (1995) had been used to the point of “disintegration.” In fact, one heroic technologist had attempted to keep the third edition alive by placing individual tattered pages in plastic sleeves assembled in a ring binder. To recommend the fourth edition of *Medically Important Fungi: A Guide to Identification* for the shelf of every mycology laboratory is redundant. It is already there. It is “the one that gets used.”

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New Books Received

Hecht GA. *Microbial Pathogenesis and the Intestinal Epithelial Cell*. Washington, DC: American Society for Microbiology Press, 2003. 577 pp. \$119.65. ISBN: 1-55581-261-9.

Lo Re V. *Hot Topics: Infectious Diseases*. Philadelphia: Elsevier Science, 2003. 395 pp. \$29.95. ISBN: 1-5605-580-6.

Booss J, Esiri MM. *Viral Encephalitis in Humans*. Washington, DC: American Society for Microbiology Press, 2003. 277 pp. \$139.95. ISBN: 1-55581-240-6.

Dionisio D. *Textbook-Atlas of Intestinal Infections and AIDS*. Milan: Springer, 2003. 514 pp. \$140.00. ISBN: 88-470-0174-9.

Dorland's *Illustrated Medical Dictionary*, 30th Edition. Philadelphia: Elsevier Science, 2003. 2190 pp. \$49.95. ISBN: 0-7216-0146-4.

Cole LA. *The Anthrax Letters: A Medical Detective Story*. Washington, DC: Joseph Henry Press, 2003. 245 pp. \$24.95. ISBN: 0-309-08881-X.