

BOOK REVIEW**“INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL AND HEALTH 2007”**

Editor: Dr Annalies Wilder-Smith

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The volume of international travel continues to increase every year. International tourist arrivals in 2005 exceeded 800 million, according to data from the World Tourism Organisation. People travel for a wide variety of reasons, ranging from business and recreation, to social (visiting friends and relatives), religious (pilgrimage) and medical trips. International travel brings to the fore several important health issues, including travel-acquired infections and non-infectious travel risks.

The prevention and management of these travel health issues are addressed in the recently updated “International Travel and Health 2007” (ITH 2007), a publication of the World Health Organisation (WHO). Given the importance of travel in Singaporean society and economy, this book is highly relevant to all healthcare providers. With the new International Health Regulations (IHR) which were ratified in 2005 coming into force on June 15, 2007, this book will have longstanding impact, particularly as it addresses the implementation of IHR 2005 in the field of travel medicine. New international vaccine certificates, for example, will have to be used for documentation of yellow fever vaccination.

ITH 2007 provides guidance from the WHO on risk assessment for travel. Groups considered include travellers with pre-existing medical conditions, and those with special needs such as children, pregnant women and elderly individuals. Travel problems covered include environmental hazards such as altitude illness, and risks associated with activities such as diving. The more typical infections to which travellers might be potentially exposed are summarised in Chapter Five, which explains the mode of transmission, geographical distribution of disease, prophylaxis, and precautionary measures. Chapter Six provides more detail on vaccine-preventable infections, indications, contraindications, and adverse reactions to vaccines.

ITH 2007 has been re-written by Dr Smith to improve readability and usefulness. The country lists provide a simplified reference to look up the transmission risks for yellow fever and malaria based on the destination. The sections on malaria and yellow fever have also been revised to reflect changes in drug resistance and epidemiology, respectively. ITH 2007 is priced very reasonably at USD 22.50 for such a useful resource.

The editor, Dr Annalies Wilder-Smith, headed the travel clinic at Tock Seng Hospital until 2006. As a point of interest for Singaporeans, the selection of Dr Smith to revise this important WHO publication signifies the honour and international recognition of Dr Smith’s contributions to the field of travel medicine. ITH 2007 will be a valuable addition to the medical resources for all health facilities which provide care to travellers.

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