Antimicrobial Prescribing for General Dental Practitioners - book review

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Antimicrobial prescribing can be a hazy subject, but a new book released by the FGDP(UK), Antimicrobial Prescribing for General Dental Practitioners, aims to help demystify this imprecise topic.

Throughout the book, authors general dental practitioners Dr Palmer, senior clinical lecturer Dr Longman, senior medicines information pharmacist Ms Randall, and Dr Pankhurst, a specialist in oral microbiology, all aim to improve the standards of patient care by providing a clear and systematic evidence-based set of guidelines. The purpose of the book is undeniably to provide GDSs with clear advice on antimicrobial prescribing in an attempt to explain the often complex decision-making process and therefore assist treatment planning and patient care.

Although the book is comprehensive, it manages to provide a clear overview of the basic principles of prescribing, whilst covering specialised subject areas concerning antimicrobials. The structure of the book is presented as a guide that is split into 13 discrete sections; from prescribing to antifungal therapy, the authors have managed right through to more specific examples, such as highlighting the best ways to illustrate quantities, the information is both concise and valuable. Included in this edition of the book for the first time the authors also touch on the subject of dosage recommendations for children, which is a helpful addition for all paediatric practitioners. At the end of the chapter there is a straightforward summary of the information given, which is a particularly useful tool, ensuring that this vital information is not ignored.

In Chapter 2 and 3, the authors demonstrate how to identify and treat various infections. Chapter 5 includes an effective flow diagram to quickly and effectively convey the management of the viruses. The authors state the choices of antimicrobials that practitioners should be aware of, through a first, second and third choice system, thus vastly simplifying the decision-making process. The chapter explains where the use of antimicrobial prescribing would be unwise, which is a practical addition.

The authors then follow up on this section and go on to describe the contentious issue of administering antimicrobials to prevent infection. In this section Antimicrobial Prescribing for General Dental Practitioners highlights the difficult ethical and medico-legal issues, affirming it is not always easy to identify overuse. It might have been to have added a specific section on antimicrobial prescribing. However, even though the book is comprehensively set out, there are areas of potential improvement.

Speaking at the launch, Dean of the FGDP(UK) Russ Ladwa said: “This is a very timely book. I was at a talk this morning on the non-surgical treatment of periodontal disease, where the speaker talked about the over-prescription and misuse of antimicrobials. As a profession we need to ensure that antimicrobials are only prescribed when necessary and in the right dosage.”

As well as being an essential reference tool, Mr Ladwa also said that the book provided practitioners with a useful opportunity to review how they work: “As a practitioner for over 50 years I found through reading this book at least three changes I need to make when prescribing.”

The authors have reviewed all of the available data and guidance, and consulted widely with professional bodies and specialist groups to provide a consensus on best clinical practice. The guidance gives clear, simple and practical advice on when to prescribe, what to prescribe, for how long and in what dose.

Editor Nikolaus Palmer said: “This book was produced to complement the BNF and provide general dental practitioners with an ‘in surgery’ easy to read evidence based guide on the management of dental infections. The authors hope that the advice provided in the document will promote appropriate antimicrobial prescribing in primary care and improve the standards of patient care.”

Reviewed by Georgia Posner

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