
HIV infection reached Asia relatively late; the epidemic was detected early and its dimensions defined quickly. The present volume “Three decades of HIV/AIDS in Asia” is an update of “AIDS in Asia: the challenge ahead” published in 2004. The book consists of 23 articles written by the eminent experts who describe magnitude of HIV epidemic in Asia and evolution of the country specific policies and programmes for prevention, detection and management of HIV infection and emerging challenges.

The first article summarizes the achievements, lessons learnt and opportunities ahead in Asia’s HIV/AIDS control programmes and sets the stage for the subsequent articles. It describes how Asia (because of the huge population) with 4.9 million HIV infected persons is next only to Sub-Saharan Africa in terms of number of HIV infected persons, (even though prevalence of HIV infection is substantially lower) and how important it is to prevent even small increase in HIV infection because it would translate into a large number of persons infected with HIV.

There are articles providing concise description of different aspects of the HIV epidemic in Asia: epidemiology and transmission dynamics of HIV infection, natural history of HIV infection, HIV TB co-infections, and HIV-STD interactions. A series of articles describes the interventions in specific groups such as sex workers, intravenous drug users, men who have sex with men, those with blood borne transmission and accidental infection in health care settings. One notable achievement was rapid elimination of transmission of HIV infection through blood transfusion and blood product infusion. In India and in some other Asian countries, HIV/AIDS control programme invested in modernization of blood banks so that there was reduction and subsequently elimination of not only HIV infection but also other transfusion borne infections such as hepatitis B, syphilis, and malaria. Hospital infection control and waste management efforts also got an impetus under HIV/AIDS control programme and enabled the countries to move towards reduction in hospital acquired infections. The WHO has set the goal of elimination of mother-to-child transmission prevention by 2015? Many Asian countries including India are now focusing on efforts to prevent mother-to-child transmission so that this goal is achieved.

There are articles describing national response to HIV/AIDS in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, China, Thailand, Cambodia and Viet Nam. These articles show how countries obtained data on dimensions of HIV epidemic, evolved and adopted appropriate and relevant policies and programmes, scaled up programmes for targeted interventions for prevention, provided access to facilities for early detection, counselling and management of HIV infection. The articles sum up the successful efforts to reach vulnerable groups for HIV prevention and management through coordination between governments, civil societies and community based organizations. Asian experience shows that it is possible to achieve reduction in HIV infection prevalence and incidence within the existing constraints of resources and manpower without in any way impeding the investment and progress in other disease control programmes or health care services.

HIV infection is now recognised as a chronic infection which requires long term treatment. In this context, articles for improving survival rates through appropriate clinical management of HIV infection
and coping with emerging drug resistance are very pertinent. It is noteworthy that India has made a major contribution in improving access to drugs for treatment of HIV infection not only in India but also globally through making generic drugs available at a relatively affordable cost. The challenges due to which HIV vaccine continues to elude all efforts have been discussed in detail in one article. The need for undertaking operational research studies enhancing access to HIV detection and treatment facilities, ensuring compliance with long term treatment have been outlined in two articles. Possibility of health insurance to meet the treatment costs has also been discussed.

Over the last three decades, there has been substantial progress in our understanding of the HIV infection, in drug development and improving access to care. This has resulted in reduction in incidence and prevalence of the disease in Asia. However, major challenges still remain. This is a must read book for all those who are interested in HIV infection in Asia.

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Importance of growth for health and development,
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Based on the deliberations held during the 65th Nestlé Nutrition Institute Workshop held in Malaysia in 2009, this book provides encapsulated material for paediatricians, auxologists, anthropologists, epidemiologists and public health scientists to evaluate and judge health status of infants and children growing under a variety of pre- and postnatal conditions and constraints. This book helps to understand important aspects of the dynamics governing interrelationship between early aberrant growth patterns, and later neurodevelopment, obesity, cardiovascular and senescence related outcomes. Besides exploring influence of body composition in infancy over health in late phase of life, hormonal control of growth and some methodological aspects concerning growth standards have also been highlighted. This book also discusses an evidence based role of early growth in the programming of subsequent health status of human beings. Alan Lucas in the introduction has not only described association of rapid early growth with greater risk of cardiovascular disease and obesity but also touched upon a concept of postnatal growth acceleration hypothesis. An understanding of such concepts and mechanisms having vast public health implications is of great importance to paediatricians and other health care providers involved in primary prevention of adult diseases.

The book consists of three parts. The first part, describes association of early growth, obesity and cardiovascular diseases, based on evidence gathered from experimental and epidemiological studies as well as animal models. Information obtained from animal models revealed that rapid early growth has adverse effects while slow postnatal growth was associated with a variety of beneficial effects. A chapter by Matthew W. Gillman tells us about early origins of obesity in West. He pointed out that obesity epidemic has affected children even during the first months of the life. He revealed that small for gestational age (SGA) infants who gain weight rapidly have worse metabolic outcomes. Hence, babies born small should not receive enriched diets to promote rapid weight gain. Another chapter in this section by Atul Singhal discusses early origins of cardiovascular disease and obesity based on randomized trials. He showed that small but healthy full-term infants who were given a standard vs enriched formula diet with 30% more protein to stimulate catch-up growth, at 8 year follow up had worse cardiovascular disease factors. While addressing the short term aspects of growth in developing world, Linda Adair expressed concern about high prevalence of poor growth in developing countries as evaluated by different anthropometric indicators (e.g. weight, height or weight for height Z scores). To promote short –term health and survival of children in developing countries, she considered growth promotion as a crucial component. She not only recognized different aspects of long and short–term effects of rapid early growth but also advised caution to avoid spillover of messages about slow growth for well-nourished children in optimal environment to those in sub-optimal situations. The important aspects concerning early nutrition and postnatal growth having significant bearing on the development of obesity and cardiovascular disease appear to be of immense use to clinicians in their day-to-day practice so as to improve quality of life of children.