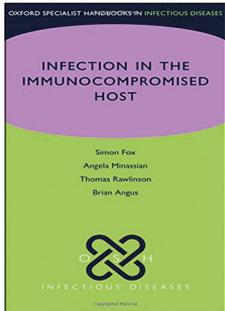




## Book

## Infection in the immunocompromised host



Oxford Specialist Handbook:  
**Infection in the immunocompromised host**  
 Simon Fox, Brian Angus,  
 Angela Minassian,  
 Thomas Rowlinson  
 Oxford University Press, 2018  
 pp 384, £39.99  
 ISBN 978-0198789987

*Infection in the immunocompromised host*, written by Simon Fox, Brian Angus, Angela Minassian, and Thomas Rowlinson, is a small book, which provides a comprehensive introductory guide to the infections that occur most frequently in immunocompromised patients. It provides a concise overview of the immune system, followed by chapters on immunosuppressive drugs, the inherited immunodeficiencies, HIV infection, and the infections associated with haematological and solid organ cancers and with solid organ or stem cell transplantation. Finally it also provides an overview of the numerous viruses, protozoa, fungi, and bacteria that most commonly cause infections in immunocompromised patients. This book is a useful resource for staff in haematology, oncology, infectious diseases, and immunology departments, although its focus is mainly on adult patients.

The book descends from illustrious origins. *The Oxford handbook of clinical medicine*, which was first published in 1985 and is currently in its tenth edition, contains a comprehensive summary of essential medical knowledge, generously interspersed with brief essays on a surprising range of topics. *Infection in the immunocompromised host* is not in the same class. It lacks the eccentric confidence of its ancestor, which provides, in the chapter on infectious diseases, a photograph of exploding skyrockets to illustrate the diversity of the tree of life; discusses Claude Bernard's and Louis Pasteur's opinions on the relative importance of both the terrain and the pathogen in susceptibility to sexually transmitted infections; and links the epidemic of typhoid in Athens in 430 BCE, and the cholera epidemic originating from the Broad St pump in London in 1854, to the effect of Annie Darwin's death from tuberculosis on her father's willingness to publish *On the Origin of the Species*!

*Infection in the immunocompromised host* is a much less flamboyant handbook. The authors are all either working in Oxford, or have worked there in the past. Their previous publications have predominantly focused on tropical medicine, HIV infection, vaccine development, and immunology. The authors have attempted to compensate for any lack of extensive clinical experience with immunocompromised patients by having many of the chapters reviewed by local clinical and laboratory specialists. However, this is not a book in which clinical vignettes are used to illustrate important or unusual points.

*Infection in the immunocompromised host* begins with a brief overview of the immune system. The innate immune system is discussed within one page of text, plus a table devoted to the cells of the innate immune system, and a figure illustrating the complement system. The discussion

of B lymphocytes and antibody production is limited to less than a page of text and one table. The extreme brevity of this chapter means that it can serve as little more than a reminder of previously learnt knowledge and as a stimulus for further study. The brevity also means that insufficient background information has been provided to facilitate the reader's understanding either of the immunopathological mechanisms of the inherited immunodeficiencies (in chapter 3) or of the mechanisms of action of immunosuppressive medications (in chapter 4).

A large chapter provides guidance on the management of patients with HIV infection and succinct advice on the usual presentation, and recommended investigations, for diseases affecting the central nervous system, lungs, gastrointestinal and genitourinary tracts, skin, and eyes. The chapter will be useful for clinicians who need a brief, clinically focused guide to the management of the conditions that complicate uncontrolled HIV infection.

Chapters on neutropenic sepsis, infections after solid organ transplantation, and infections after haemopoietic stem cell transplantation are followed by a chapter on the many medical conditions (eg, diabetes, chronic liver or kidney disease, splenectomy, etc.) that can result in immune compromise and a chapter that provides advice on the risks, and prevention, of infection arising from international travel by immunocompromised patients. A consistent feature of each chapter is that having identified the pathogens most likely to be responsible for disease in each clinical context, the reader is directed to treatment information on pages towards the end of the book, which discuss each pathogen separately. Unfortunately these pages generally do no more than recommend the most suitable antimicrobial drugs, and their usual route and duration of therapy. Readers will have to use some other guidance to determine the most appropriate doses.

The last third of the book provides concise summaries of the clinical features, diagnosis, and treatment for the diseases caused by each of the viruses, protozoae, fungi, and bacteria most likely to infect immunocompromised patients. This section is particularly well written and, with the exception of dosing guidance, provides the level of practical detail likely to be found useful by most junior doctors. A useful feature is that, for many of the most important pathogens, the authors suggest relevant British or European websites. In summary, this book is likely to prove a helpful primer for doctors challenged by the dilemmas of diagnosing and managing infections in immunocompromised patients.

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