This book is a collection of papers presented at the ninth Sir Dorabji Tata Symposium held in March, 2008, at the Indian Institute of Science Campus. Sir Dorabji Tata Symposia are a series presenting reports on tropical diseases in India.

Resistance to antibiotics has been fascinating albeit a difficult study of bacterial mechanisms vis–à-vis human infections. Constant efforts to understand the mechanisms have resulted in several path breaking discoveries in antibiotic resistance among bacteria.

This book is a compilation of series of lectures. The emphasis is on current status and research issues, testing methods, clinical uses of antibiotics and discussing basic testing methodologies; interpretations, reporting and matching with disease progression. Ample illustration of sensitivity plates, diagrams, charts and tables highlights current practices. Quality control in resistance testing has been emphasized. Resistance mechanisms in protozoa have been infrequently investigated. Targeting the plasmodium via purine metabolic path has been discussed in great detail in the chapter on resistance in protozoa which will perhaps encourage new drug designing.

*Kala azar* found in several parts of India has become difficult to treat due to steadily increasing resistance to several compounds. A short chapter briefly discusses the reasons for resistance and preventive policies in *Kala azar* briefly dwelling upon interesting aspects of risks in nonantimony antileismanials.

The papers on drug resistant tuberculosis are a highlight of the symposium. The current status of resistance in India traces development of MDR TB to prevalence of primary resistance and acquired resistance in several parts of the country. XDR TB and its testing methodology using phenotypic and genotypic methods are included in this session. The global scenario of XDR TB with the World Health Organization perspective, in 2008, has also been highlighted.

The session on laboratory issues is an amalgamation of several clinically important laboratory tests. It begins with antifungal testing methodology and break point interpretations for clinically important filamentous fungi and yeasts. Salmonella infections have been endemic in almost all parts of India. Trends in antibiotic resistance have been closely monitored across the country through several reports and review articles. A chapter in this session deals with resistance patterns and phage type prevalence studies in India. Several studies on methicillin resistant Staphylococci (MRSA) discuss the genetic basis of resistance, molecular typing methods, clonal studies of hospital and community acquired MRSA with virulence determinants. Clinical implications of MRSA, prevention and control have also been discussed.

Basic research complimenting clinical studies is the right step forward. The session on basic research begins with an insight into discovery and development of new antibiotics. An understanding of molecular mechanism for drug development has been discussed for antifungal and fluoroquinolones for mycobacteria. Bacterial cell wall as a drug target for antibiotics has been explored in the chapter on novel targets for design of therapeutics. Monitoring antibiotic resistance in hospitals coupled with infection control is a laboratorian’s dilemma. This is perhaps the best way to contain emergence and spread of resistance among hospital pathogens. This session includes a paper highlighting the process and is a mixed bag of papers on community acquired and spread of multi drug resistance across the nation and globe, including resistance in Salmonellae. Resistance in HIV also finds place at the session. An important public health scourge could have been discussed in greater detail in the Indian context. Papers on policies and practices governing use of antibiotics in animals, transfer of resistance from domestic animal sources bring up the rear of this session.

A panel discussion on the role of public health professionals and the community in control of antibiotic resistance presents a comprehensive report on understanding the complexity of the problem, reflections on policies and practices in India. A paper from Swedish experience and global challenge highlights the need for a concerted global effort to contain antimicrobial resistance. Location-specific, integrated, antibiotic resistance management strategy outlines the flow path of antibiotics from manufacturer to hospital waste water disposal. The paper stresses the need for awareness and policies to address this problem.

Rear of this monogram contains abstracts of best posters presented during the symposium.

The problem of antibiotic resistance is multifactorial.
The ninth Sir Dorabji Tata Symposium brought together several scientists, clinical and basic researchers, and laboratorians on a single platform to discuss various aspects of antimicrobial resistance.

The original papers have been presented as they were with several photographs, figures and tables. Minor editing could have improved the presentations. Some of the tables and figures appear very crowded.

The editors, however, must be congratulated on their attempt to disseminate this information in the form of a book as has been done earlier.

Priced at Rs 715, with an attractive jacket, this monogram makes interesting reading and would be useful for medical institute libraries as well as personal collection.

Reba Kanungo
Editor, Indian Journal of Medical Microbiology
A-3/38 Labourdonnaisse Street, Puducherry605001,
E-mail: rkanungo1@gmail.com

BIOSECURITY
Editors: P. K. Shetty, Ajay Parida, M. S. Swaminathan
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The book on ‘Biosecurity’ edited by P. K Shetty, Ajay Parida and M. S Swaminathan is a compendium of articles ranging from biosecurity of food, health, agriculture and environment in India. Various authors have given the broad regulations pertaining to different aspects of biosecurity. Most of the authors have given the rules, laws and acts governing its implementation. Such detailed descriptions seem to be superfluous especially when Google search is handy and easy. Poor quality of presentation with rhetoric on statistical data disappoints the reader. Case studies highlighting the present day scenario could have been included to drive home the conflicting views with clarity. Chapters written by most of the authors are superficial, lacking conviction, depth of information and knowledge.

With regard to biosecurity of health, for example, the presentation by two of the authors is incomplete and devoid of practical utility. The rapid spread of avian influenza and H1N1 virus threatening the health care delivery system and economy of the nation is a classical example drawing parallel to some of the worst pandemics the world has witnessed. None of the contributors seem to have fully succeeded in their efforts to project the need and importance of biosecurity in food, health, agriculture etc. Conspicuous by its omission are case studies in each of the defined areas where biosecurity is threatened and the possible imaginative ways to counter it.

On agriculture and food production most of the authors emphasise the use of organic farming, vermi composting and bio remediation for obvious reasons. How to harness the natural resources for maximum output per unit area is the need of the hour. In the present scenario, community level participation, as envisaged by the Father of our nation, is one such proposition none of the contributors seem to have thought about for achieving sustainable agriculture.

Overall, no doubt, the book on ‘Biosecurity’ contains a wealth of information- like a ready reckoner- to understand the Laws and Acts enacted by the Government of India, but, most of the contributors have failed in their attempts to convince the reader on the need for biosecurity in India and the consequences thereof if policy makers and the people as well fail themselves.

S. Jayachandran
Professor, Department of Biotechnology,
Pondicherry University, Pondicherry-605014, India.
E-mail: sr_jayachandran@yahoo.com