

## Recent Publications

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### **Onchocerciasis control: a progress report**

This report of the WHO Expert Committee on Onchocerciasis provides a comprehensive review of the socioeconomic impact of the disease and of recent advances in related clinical, scientific, and epidemiological issues.

In particular, it reviews the status of vector control and the chemotherapy of the disease in the light of the recent introduction of ivermectin. This has, at last, created a prospect for acceptable and practicable suppressive therapy. There is also hope that, by reducing the microfilarial population in patients, it will reduce transmission. This is particularly heartening in the face of evidence that the disease is spreading in some areas of South America. Ultimately, however, a drug is needed that will destroy the adult worms. It would be counter-productive if the unquestioned value of ivermectin were to slacken the search for one. The Expert Committee report provides a comprehensive and authoritative overview of the situation.

**Reference:** WHO Expert Committee on Onchocerciasis. *Third Report*. WHO Technical Report Series, No. 752 (1987).

### **Chemotherapy of tropical diseases**

This book offers considerably more than a timely update on recent advances in the management of the transmissible tropical diseases. It analyses the major influences that have determined research on the chemotherapy of these conditions from the time of Ehrlich's work on trypanosomiasis to the present day and points to the imperative need for the innovative effort to be sustained.

No drug yet exists, for example, that is effective against adult filarial worms or the chronic stage of Chagas' disease. Nor are private companies offered adequate incentive to invest in research

directed to products that are unlikely ever to recuperate their development costs. Independent financial sponsorship is seen as a vital stimulus to engage the commitment of research teams in academia and industry. The initiative taken by WHO, the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme in setting up WHO's Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases is depicted as a model in this regard. In setting out to identify priority research goals, the book leaves no doubt that rich rewards in terms of public health are attainable if the resources are forthcoming.

**Reference:** M. Hooper. *Chemotherapy of tropical diseases*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons (1987).

### **Biotechnological products: the scientific basis of their regulation**

The rapid development of biotechnology has created challenges not only for pharmaceutical manufacturers but also for national regulatory authorities. Fundamentally new approaches to the production of biologically-derived substances establish a need for new approaches to their control and a timely conference organized by Interscience in Paris in September 1987 brought together experts from industry and academia and regulatory officials from Europe, Japan and North America to review current practices and to discuss prospects for harmonization of regulatory requirements. It was agreed that, where guidelines can be justified on a sound scientific basis, these should be generally adopted.

It was recognized, however, that the further evolution of production techniques will inevitably raise new issues regarding the quality and safety of finished products. Somewhere, it was felt, an international forum needs to be created to encourage informal discussion of these technical problems as they arise.

**Reference:** *Biotechnologically-derived medical agents. The scientific basis of their regulation*. J.L. Gueriguian, V. Fattorusso & D. Poggiolini (Editors). Raven Press.