Book Review

Taenia solium *Cysticercosis*. *From Basic to Clinical Science* (ed. Singh, G. & Prabhakar, S.), pp. 457. CABI Publishing, UK, 2002. ISBN 0 85199 628 0. £85.
DOI: 10.1017/S0031182003003408

Books devoted to a particular cestode parasite are not common and thus I was excited about the prospects of a book devoted to the unique tapeworm *Taenia solium*. However, as the title suggests, the emphasis is on the metacestode and the consequences of infection with the cysticerci. These can be very serious since the larval parasite has a predilection in its human host for the nervous system and in particular the brain. This not only results in problems related to treatment, whether this involves surgery or chemotherapy, but also in relation to diagnosis. From personal experience, I know that this may be particularly problematic in non-endemic regions.

The pig is central to the epidemiology of *T. solium* cysticercosis in terms of its geographical distribution which is mainly restricted to Mexico, Central and South America, Central and South Africa and Southern Asia. However, the parasite is an increasing threat to travellers, either as a result of foodborne transmission of the cysticerci or by ingestion of infective eggs through direct contact or contamination. It is also seen as an emerging infectious disease in South East Asia and the Pacific as it appears to be extending its geographical range. Thus this book is very timely as a source of reference, particularly for policy advisers and clinicians.

The book consists of 44 chapters and is divided into six sections: Basic science; Epidemiology; Clinical aspects; Investigational aspects; and Therapy and intervention. Approximately 60% of the book is devoted to clinical aspects and the remainder to basic science and epidemiology. This balance is appropriate but there is some repetition and overlap in the epidemiology and clinical chapters, which are principally examining the situation in different geographical areas or the experiences of different clinicians or clinical approaches. The Editors have gone to great efforts in attracting a large group of contributors and should be congratulated for this as it is certainly a strength of this book. However, there is often a dilemma with multi-authored texts of balancing structure and content with available expertise. With the former, it may result in more selectivity in terms of contributors but ensures sufficient depth and tends to avoid repetition. In this case, the book reflects an emphasis on obtaining input from a wealth of available expertise from which the book's structure appears to have developed. This may not be a true reflection of how the book came to be, but its content does suggest this.

The book contains a wealth of useful information and data, and is well written and illustrated. Each chapter has an excellent bibliography and current references are frequently cited. As with all CABI productions, the book's presentation is excellent. My only criticism is that the index is not as useful as it could be and with a text of over 450 pages and 44 chapters, a comprehensive index is essential.

From a biological perspective, *T. solium* is unique in having the capacity to utilise its normal definitive host, humans, also as an intermediate host – albeit in this role humans are not a 'good' host in terms of the parasite's chances of transmission. Personally, I am disappointed that the biological aspects are not dealt with more thoroughly in this book. I feel this would have broadened the potential readership which will be principally researchers and professionals involved in the epidemiology and clinical management of *T. solium* cysticercosis.

R. C. ANDREW THOMPSON
Division of Veterinary and Biomedical Sciences
Murdoch University
Murdoch, WA 6150
Australia

Parasitology (2003), **126**, 570.