

Infectious diseases: a selection of resources

John Eyers surveys the web for another set of valuable recommendations



The World Health Organization's *Global Burden of Disease*¹ makes instructive reading when comparing the burden of infectious diseases in low-, middle-, and high-income countries. It comes as no surprise that in low-income countries, 60% of the top ten killer diseases are categorised as infectious – the top three being lower respiratory infections, diarrhoeal disease, and HIV/AIDS – whereas in high-income countries only one (lower respiratory infections) makes it onto the list. Information resources in infectious diseases (except HIV/AIDS and TB) are, surprisingly, not as widely available as other important categories of disease, perhaps because they do not affect the West as much as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and cancer. Could the 10/90 gap idea be applied equally to information resources too? The following are a selection of resources.

Weekly Epidemiological Record

(<http://www.who.int/wer/en>)

WHO's most important publication for reporting outbreaks of infectious disease worldwide, with an emphasis on reporting disease that affects the world's poorest. Regular epidemiological reviews of trends in the pattern of particular diseases are also included. These data are then fed into other WHO resources, such as the *Global Health Observatory* (<http://www.who.int/gho/en>) and the new *Global Health Atlas* (<http://apps.who.int/globalatlas/default.asp>) which aims to provide a single point of access to data, reports, and documents on the major diseases of poverty.

Cochrane Infectious Diseases Group

(<http://cidg.cochrane.org>)

Sterling efforts have been made by this and other groups to commission and produce systematic reviews on infectious diseases in low- and middle-income countries; these reviews are published in the *Cochrane Library* database (<http://www.thecochranelibrary.com>) which is available free to most African countries. Over 450 reviews and protocols have so far been published on the latest evidence from the literature, the largest number being in respiratory infections, neonatal infections, diarrhoeal disease, HIV/AIDS, malaria, and neglected tropical diseases.

For clinical aspects of infectious diseases, the following might be useful:

As a member of HIFA2015 (<http://www.hifa2015.org/>), John Eyers believes one of the biggest challenges for improved health in less-developed countries is ensuring that equal access to appropriate and evidence-based health information is made available to all.

Karolinska Institute

(<http://www.mic.stacken.kth.se/Diseases>)

A comprehensive list of web resources by category of disease – bacterial, viral, parasitic, etc.

Tropical Medicine and Infectious Diseases from Essential Health Links

(<http://www.mic.stacken.kth.se/Diseases>)

A huge list of web resources, with a focus on low- and middle-income countries, arranged by category of disease as well as gateway sites, email lists, and organisations.

Antwerp Institute of Tropical Medicine: Illustrated Lecture Notes on Tropical Medicine

(http://content-e.itg.be/content-e/pub_ITG/Illustrated_lecture_notes_on_Tropical_Medicine_1169817124568/index.htm)

An excellent series of lectures with slides of life cycles, blood films, exercises, etc covering the gamut of tropical infections and their treatment. See also the most comprehensive listing of the Antwerp Institute of Tropical Medicine Library's infectious and tropical diseases resources (<http://lib.itg.be/biblinks.htm>).

Finally, if there is one journal which will give you up-to-date (and short!) reviews of infectious diseases written by world experts, it is *Current Opinion in Infectious Diseases*, available in full text through Hinari (<http://www.who.int/hinari/en>). Each issue is presented in a standardised format addressing one or two particular topics in depth. References of especial importance are highlighted and annotated. Others in the series with infectious disease content (also available through Hinari) include *Current Opinion in HIV and AIDS*, ... *in Gastroenterology*, ... *in Allergy & Clinical Immunology*, ... *in Pulmonary Medicine*, ... *in Microbiology*, ... *in Pediatrics*, ... *in Virology*. A useful feature of Hinari is its listing of journal titles by subject (<http://extranet.who.int/hinari/en/journals.php>).

For the important area of neglected tropical diseases see the freely available open-access journal *PLoS Neglected Tropical Diseases* (<http://www.plosntds.org/home.action>), and reports and resources on the USAID's Neglected Diseases Program (<http://www.neglecteddiseases.gov/resources/index.html>). Articles on infectious diseases will also appear in other specialty and general medical journals, so using a database like PubMed (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed>) is the best way of searching the literature initially, rather than relying on subject-based journals lists.

Reference

1. World Health Organization. WHO global burden of disease: 2004 update. Available from: www.who.int/healthinfo/global_burden_disease/2004_report_update/en/index.htm. Geneva, WHO, 2008.