

Global Mapping of Infectious Diseases: Methods, Examples, and Emerging Applications

Simon I. Hay, Alastair Graham,
and David J. Rogers, editors

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In 1849, John Snow pioneered the application of mapping to public health by producing a map depicting locations of cholera cases around the Broad Street pump in London (1). Thus, any book describing recent advances in mapping infectious disease is potentially of interest to practicing public health officials. The topics covered in the 11 chapters in this book range from the very technical, such as descriptions of satellite-obtained environmental data, to the geographic and climatic distribution of dengue and yellow fever, plotted in risk maps for those diseases. However, most public health officials will likely find this book overly specialized, particularly the first 4 chapters. These contain detailed descriptions of the technical aspects of measuring, modeling, and analyzing climatic and geospatial data. Public health officials are likely to appreciate the chapters describing the distribution and factors potentially affecting further spread of disease. These chapters present data on the distribution of malaria, dengue, yellow fever, soil-transmitted helminths, and tickborne diseases, and information on how global transport systems and climate changes could alter the distribution of diseases.

Some of the authors have fallen prey to the rather regrettable tendency to address "hot topics," such as bioterrorism and the spread of pandemics, even if such topics are somewhat outside the domain of the rest of the book. The result is that in 1 chapter there are 1 or 2 pages in which the authors briefly, and mostly uncritically, review some of the most well-known literature on these topics. Readers would have been better served had the authors of that chapter focused on vectorborne diseases, for which they are justly well known. Furthermore, even in chapters focusing on practical aspects of disease distribution, many sections contain detailed descriptions of methods that most public health officials are likely to want to skip over. Placed at the back of the book are the color plates of maps (the central feature of such a book). This placement is annoying because it makes it difficult to quickly find the figures being described in a given chapter. Overall, this book is more likely to appeal to the specialist, who will find it a useful addition to a technical library, while most public health officials will likely be better served in seeking a book containing more general descriptions of mapping infectious diseases.

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Reference

1. Richardson BW. Snow on cholera. New York: Commonwealth Fund; 1936.

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Handbook of Helminthiasis for Public Health

D.W.T. Crompton
and Lorenzo Savioli

Taylor & Francis CRC Press,
London, United Kingdom, 2006
ISBN: 0849333288
Pages: 362; Price: US \$139.95

"I'll never forget the day I read a book." Daniel Pinkwater begins his book commentaries for National Public Radio with this Durante-Barnett tune. This came to mind when I realized I have never before read a textbook on parasitology from start to finish. I usually rely on a reference to refresh my memory about a detail of this or that life cycle or to reinforce a grant application with the number of those afflicted across the globe. Handbook of Helminthiasis for Public Health by D.W.T. Crompton and Lorenzo Savioli, however, bears reading straight through. What makes a complete reading so well worthwhile and also sets the book apart from most on either public health or parasitology is its successful marriage of these 2 points of view. This book covers the most common helminths by focusing on the parts of their biology that are most relevant to public health. Methods for rapid inexpensive surveys, international health initiatives, the economics of boreholes, and latrine design are discussed next to metacercarial development.

The focus on helminths also sets this book apart. In the first place, helminths are naturally engaging because of their ability to integrate their own complex biology with human biology and culture. Second, a significant re-evaluation is under way regarding the influence of parasitic worm infection on health. This refutes the perception in some circles that