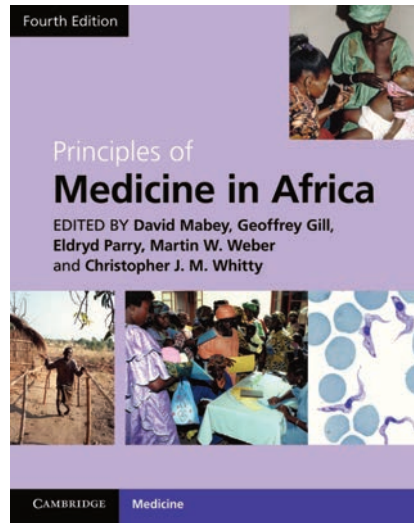


BOOK REVIEWS

Principles of Medicine in Africa

Ed. by David Mabey, Geoffrey Gill, Eldryd Parry, Martin W Weber and Christopher JM Whitty. 4th ed.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. ISBN 978-1-107-00251-7



This is the 4th edition of this important book, which was first published in 1976, and a far thicker tome than the original. As implied by the title, the scope of the publication is huge – medicine in Africa, arguably one of the more interesting continents in terms of pathology. And that pathology is not always driven by disease-causing organisms, as the opening section of the book reminds us, covering people and the environment, food and nutrition, refugees and disasters, and how to manage a health service.

Mother and child health has a complete section, mirroring the concerns of the Millennium Development Goals – sadly missed in most African countries for myriad reasons, poor health systems being one of the most pertinent. Infections come next, with the major infections such as HIV and tuberculosis singled out from the sections on viral, bacterial, protozoal, helminth and fungal infections.

Non-communicable diseases are of course becoming all too common, even in the developing world, and are covered in detail, along with the diseases of the body systems,

cancer and palliative care (the latter poorly provided in most parts of the continent), and venoms and poisons.

Like all Cambridge University Press publications the book is laid out well, with easy-to-read text, plus text boxes, illustrations, tables and graphs where these add to the text. Colour photographs are used to aid understanding and diagnosis, and are of high quality.

My only criticism is the make-up of contributors to the book. Africa is poorly represented. The sections on HIV and tuberculosis, for example, are provided predominantly by authors from the UK and Europe. This is strange when there is such expertise in these common infections right here in Africa. I would urge the publishers to look more broadly for authors when putting together the next edition of this excellent textbook.

Bridget Farham

Deputy Editor, SAMJ
ugqirha@iafrica.com