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PREFACE

There has long been a clear need for a comprehensive text on antimicrobial therapy. It is hoped that this book will fulfill that need. In spite of the publication of a wealth of isolated data, no single text exists in which all the essential areas have been covered.

Today, in every field of clinical practice, antimicrobial agents are being widely used. It is therefore of the utmost importance that physicians be thoroughly acquainted with them. This book provides necessary information about the nature of these agents and about their use. The first portion is devoted to basic pharmacologic principles of importance to the clinician; the second to clinical application. In order to avoid duplication, the dosages, routes of administration, and preparation procedures are outlined in the last chapter. However, where individual authors differ from one another in any way, they have included their specific recommendations, each in his own chapter.

The authors of the various sections of this book have been chosen because of their leadership and advanced knowledge in the specific fields about which they are writing. The editor is most grateful to these authors who have made this text so thorough and comprehensive.

BENJAMIN M. KAGAN, M.D.

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part one

APPLIED PHARMACOLOGY



chapter 1

Antimicrobial Drugs: Mechanisms and Factors Influencing Their Action

EUGENE SANDERS and LEIGHTON E. CLUFF

The mechanisms of action of antimicrobial agents may be discussed within three frames of reference: molecular or subcellular, cellular, and biological. Mechanisms on the cellular or subcellular level involve interactions of drug and parasite exclusively; those on the biological level, the triad of host, drug, and parasite. Application of advances in our understanding on any of these levels is frequently of value to the physician involved in care of patients with infectious diseases. The purpose of the present discussion is twofold: to review briefly the current status of our knowledge of the molecular mechanisms of antimicrobial action, and to describe those interactions of host, microorganism, and drug that may modify or impair the anticipated action of antimicrobial drugs in vivo.

MOLECULAR AND CELLULAR MECHANISMS OF ANTIMICROBIAL ACTION

Knowledge of the molecular mechanisms of action of the antimicrobial drugs has increased exponentially during the past several years. This advance

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Table 1-1. *Classification of Antimicrobial Agents in Current Use According to Molecular Mechanism of Action**Agents that impede replication of genetic information*

Nalidixic acid
Griseofulvin

Agents that impair translation of genetic information into protein synthesis

Chloramphenicol
The tetracyclines
Erythromycin
Lincomycin
Kanamycin
Neomycin
Streptomycin

Agents that alter structure and function of the cell wall

Cycloserine
Vancomycin
Ristocetin
Bacitracin
The penicillins
Cephalothin and analogues

Agents that restrict function of the cell membrane

Gramicidin
Tyrocidin
Polymyxin B
Colistin
Amphotericin B
Nystatin

has paralleled, and was in large part a by-product of, increased understanding of the replication of genetic information and its translation into synthesis of specific proteins. Description of this association is beyond the scope of this discussion; the reader may consult the excellent review by Carter and McCarty for details.² The antimicrobial agents in current clinical use may be classified into four major categories, for they may either (1) impede replication of genetic information, (2) impair translation of genetic information into protein synthesis, (3) alter structure and function of cell walls, or (4) restrict function of cell membranes. Drugs constituting each of these groups are listed in Table 1-1. Drugs that impair intermediary metabolism, such as the sulfonamides, as well as most of the antituberculous agents, will not be included in this discussion.

Agents That Impede Replication of Genetic Information

Nalidixic acid and griseofulvin are structurally related to the purine nucleotides. Both have been shown to block DNA synthesis in sensitive microorganisms.^{8,19} Although their precise locus of action is unknown, their structural similarity to purines suggests that they may inhibit DNA replication at the level of assembly of the purine nucleotides.

Agents That Impair Translation of Genetic Information

These drugs either inhibit protein synthesis (chloramphenicol, the tetracyclines, erythromycin, and lincomycin) or induce formation of defective protein molecules (kanamycin, neomycin, and streptomycin). The former are bacteriostatic, the latter bactericidal.

Chloramphenicol has been known for over a decade to abolish protein synthesis in bacterial cells.^{6,7} That this effect is not limited to microorganisms has also been well recognized. The universality of inhibition of protein synthesis by chloramphenicol readily accounts for its major toxicity in man—impairment of hemoglobin synthesis. Chloramphenicol has no effect upon cell synthesis of mucopeptides, respiration, or permeability.^{6,7} It has recently been shown to inhibit protein synthesis by preventing attachment of messenger RNA (mRNA) to ribosomes.¹² This activity may be antagonized by synthetic mRNA¹¹ or phenylalanine.¹⁰

The tetracyclines and lincomycin abolish bacterial protein synthesis by inhibition of the binding of amino acid-activated transfer RNA (tRNA) to ribosomes.^{3,28} Because of the differences in antibacterial spectrum of these two drugs, one may anticipate that they inhibit tRNA binding through dissimilar mechanisms. Erythromycin, on the other hand, shares the antibacterial spectrum of lincomycin. It may thus restrict protein synthesis by a mechanism closely related or identical to that of lincomycin.

The aminoglycoside antibiotics, streptomycin, kanamycin, and neomycin, appear to act by similar mechanisms. These drugs produce specific misreadings in the genetic code at the level of the ribosome.⁵ After their attachment to the ribosome, they appear to permit incorporation of one or more incorrect amino acids into a growing peptide chain, resulting in synthesis of defective proteins. Since these drugs are bactericidal, it may be reasoned either that these defective proteins are lethal to the cell or that the deficiency in normal proteins created by their synthesis leads to failure of one or more vital metabolic functions of the cell. Convincing evidence in support of either of these hypotheses has not been presented.

Agents That Alter Structure and Function of the Bacterial Cell Wall

Knowledge of the chemical structure and biosynthesis of bacterial cell walls has been reviewed by Perkins.²² The antimicrobial agents known to affect bacterial cell walls adversely are vancomycin, ristocetin, bacitracin, cycloserine, the penicillins, and cephalothin and its analogues. These drugs are bactericidal for sensitive cells.

Cycloserine is a structural analogue of D-alanine, one of the substrates for the pentapeptide side chain within the cell wall.²⁷ This drug appears to prevent assembly of the side chain containing D-alanine by competitively inhibiting one or both of the enzymes, alanine racemase or D-alanyl-D-alanine synthetase.^{20,26} Vancomycin, ristocetin, and bacitracin appear to inhibit the