
“Politicians must take into account competing interests of which citizens’ health is only one; others include economic development, national security, balance of trade, tourism. Planting corn might well create a new habitat for virus-borne rodents; building a dam might well allow for increased hatching of virus-carrying mosquitoes. But how many new cases of disease is it worth to enable a country to mount the agricultural and industrial growth that the corn planting or the dam building allows” (p. 190).

In her book, A Dancing Matrix—Voyages Along the Viral Frontier, Robin Marantz Henig investigates the role of human behavior in the emergence of viruses and unusual diseases in humans and other animals. Human beings have used their ingenuity to radically change their environment in the past and continue to do so. Diseases arise and are conquered, or have mysteriously disappeared without bold intervention. Virologists and public health officials, such as Stephen Morse (virologist, Rockefeller University); Joshua Lederberg (Nobel laureate and president emeritus, Rockefeller University); and Richard Krause (senior scientist, Fogarty International Center-NIH) have been called upon to explain viral illness as less a matter of wity, mutating viruses than of the (often creative) actions of man. For scientists to track emerging viruses many components must be considered, “not only science and health factors but shifts in the political, economic, and social climates as well.”

Henig stresses the role of human activities in creating conditions in which viruses already existing in some other environment are transported across geographic and species boundaries. This is what Stephen Morse, has labeled “viral traffic.” That is, most emerging viruses are not human viruses; but because humans put themselves in proximity to the natural host, humans can become infected. Henig cites, as one example, the expansion of the Brazilian Amazon cacao fields which led to more than 200,000 cases of Oropouche fever from 1961 to 1981. Apparently, the insect vector for this disease, a biting midge, bred easily in the discarded cacao shells.

In spite of the human animal’s ability to invade any spot on the globe, human dominion is not an absolute. Henig reminds the reader again and again, as far as the natural order of things stand, humans are quite tangential. We are capable of rearranging the world in amazing ways and harnessing or domesticating other animals and plants to better serve our needs, but human beings will never totally control their environment.

A Dancing Matrix looks at the various relationships between man and microbe—and the microbe is neither necessarily good nor bad. A virus, which can trick a cell into letting it inside, can replicate and provoke disease, replicate and do nothing noticeable to the host, or be domesticated by humans in order to insert a health-generating element into animals and plants, as geneticists are doing now. If humans bump up against a virus that interrupts healthy cells and induces sickness, it is because humans have put themselves in the path of the virus.

Henig does not lead her reader through a story of emerging viruses without first providing a short primer in the biology of viruses (she calls chapter three, “A Virus Primer”). The reader is introduced to the physiology of DNA viruses, RNA viruses and retroviruses. (At the conclusion of the book Henig introduces adenoviruses.) Henig describes how viruses transuse a vector, reproduce and then, when deposited in a host reservoir, colonize that host’s cells in order to replicate themselves. A virus is loose DNA or RNA. It can replicate only by invading a cell’s own DNA and then usurping that cell’s resources for making needed proteins. Not really dead and not quite live, the virus has taught molecular biologists about life processes, more specifically about the variety of methods by which proteins are produced. Francis Crick, co-discoverer of the structure of DNA, called the conversion of DNA into RNA to protein the “central dogma” of genetics. Many viruses invert that activity by converting RNA into DNA. So much for the central dogma. Henig describes how viruses transfuse a vector, reproduce and make viruses.

Viruses can change the conditions in which they flourish. The appearance of HIV is the most notorious example of an emerging virus. In A Dancing Matrix, the author presents a fair discussion of the origins of the virus that causes AIDS in humans. With enough objectivity, she explains why scientists have placed the origin of AIDS in Africa and acknowledges the role of sensationalism in the spread of such rumors as (1) the virus was passed from man to man during an act of sexual intercourse, or (2) HIV arose after a laboratory manipulation, and perhaps was then deliberately released into the environment. My only criticism would be that she fails to catch herself succumbing to this same sensationalist gossip when she recounts from other sources the story of Gaetan Dugas, who “some American epidemiologists have called ‘Patient Zero’.” She could have spared the reader the frivolous details of Dugas’ appearance and sociability as well as the allegations that Dugas vindictively had deliberate, unprotected sex with others.

Although the emergence of AIDS is responsible for the public’s greater awareness of infectious diseases, aware-

This book contains twelve chapters that discuss a variety of topics pertaining to therapy with "ethnic" minorities. The chapters draw rather heavily from experiences with members of minority populations in London. In fact, many of the authors are consultants to or workers of the Nafsiyat Intercultural Therapy Center which is located in North London and was set up in 1983. The book grew out of discussions at the conference on Assessment and Treatment Across Cultures which was sponsored by the Nafsiyat several years ago.

The chapters that comprise the book are divided into three sections. Part I is entitled Themes and contains three chapters, two of a purely theoretical nature and one which discusses general issues pertaining to therapy with "ethnic" minorities. This is perhaps the most heterogeneous section of the book. It covers: (1) the work conducted in the transcultural unit of Lynfield Mount Hospital in Bradford; (2) a theoretical analysis with practical case examples of types of family structure which, while geared to ethnically diverse groups, seems more academic and formal and can stand alone as a contribution aimed at integrating the complex set of issues involving persons from different cultures; (3) the problem of racism in therapy, particularly when the ethnicity and color of skin of therapist and client/patient bring in to play direct or indirect clashes and themes of oppression; (4) problems involving children and adolescents which result from identity conflicts fueled by differences in ethnic and racial background as these are played in a society in which racism is prominent; (5) problems experienced by social workers as a result of intercultural work; and finally (6) problems and approaches associated with clients that have been victims of torture.

The book contains a very useful Appendix which consists of practical issues surrounding the assessment and management of four difficult but prototypical cases which highlight intercultural problems. Possible questions and themes for discussion that the Nafsiyat workers have found useful are included. The appendix material can serve to structure a workshop or program of practical instruction and guidance for workers whose clients are from ethnic minorities.

This book encompasses most if not all of the issues that come into focus in the event of cultural, ethnic and linguistic differences between therapists and clients. The book does not strictly presuppose an informed understanding of the field, although I wonder whether the complex theoretical issues it masters will be fully appreciated by all who read it in a directly continuous way. Certainly, by reading many of the more practical chapters first, a beginner can "warm up" to tackling some of the more strictly theoretical ones.

The book has many strengths. One is the way it links theoretical and practical issues. Another is the tact, sensitivity and general clinical wisdom that its contributors reflect. They do not flinch from tackling head on and in