Preface

Infections in injection drug users

Illicit drug use is a problem of major proportions in the United States and throughout the world. Almost every aspect of modern life is affected in some way by the underground economy associated with the production, distribution, or consumption of illegal narcotics. The criminal justice system in the United States is heavily weighted down with cases involving some aspect of the drug trade. We have a “war on drugs” that preceded the war on terrorism and it has been suggested that the profits from illegal drug use help support worldwide terrorist activities. The practice of medicine is not immune to a problem of such proportions. In some urban settings, individuals with drug-use associated conditions comprise a sizeable percent of patients requiring medical attention. With respect to infection, there must be few populations with more frequent and more serious complications directly associated with their lifestyle. Indeed, although every infectious disease associated with injection drug use is seen in other groups, the opportunity to address so many at the same time and in the same patient is rarely encountered in any other medical setting. Conditions others are acquainted with from their reading become commonplace to clinicians caring for injection drug users. For that very reason, in this issue of Infectious Disease Clinics of North America dealing with infections in injection drug users, we offer a review to those seeking information because they rarely see such patients as well as to those who do so frequently. We are fortunate to have recruited a group of authors with both experience and expertise in the treatment of injection drug users. The topics range from socioeconomic and epidemiologic issues to immunologic and medical topics. It is our hope that readers...
will find this review a timely and useful resource when dealing with this most difficult of patient populations.

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