Preface

The increasing body of research data in clinical medicine has led to the need for evidence synthesis studies. Thus, a considerable number of systematic reviews and meta-analyses have been published dealing with important issues in various fields of clinical medicine. In this issue of Infectious Diseases Clinics of North America experts in performing meta-analyses and authorities in infectious diseases have contributed 14 articles summarizing published evidence synthesis studies in infectious diseases.

In the introductory article, the strengths and limitations of systematic reviews and meta-analyses are reviewed. In the following article the main statistical considerations of meta-analyses are thoroughly discussed. The contribution of meta-analyses in the identification of risk factors for infections and the comparison of diagnostic tests is reviewed in the subsequent two articles. Also, two articles are devoted to important clinical therapeutic questions in infectious diseases: the optimal duration of antimicrobial treatment and the comparison of combination antimicrobial treatment with monotherapy. Six articles summarize the contribution of meta-analyses to various hot clinical questions for specific infections: HIV-AIDS, viral hepatitis, respiratory tract infections, urinary tract infections, and malaria. Finally, the last two articles deal with the role of meta-analyses in advancing knowledge regarding the management of infections in two special populations: surgical patients and pediatric patients.

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