

## BOOK REVIEW

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**Rifaximin : A Poorly Absorbed Antibiotic. Pharmacology and Clinical Use.** Scarpignato C. (Edited by –). Karger, Basel, 2005.

Rifaximin is a semisynthetic rifamycin first described in 1982. It is minimally absorbed by the normal gastrointestinal tract and which has been recently approved by the FDA in the US for the treatment of traveler's diarrhea. In Europe, it is likely available only into the Italian market. Its antimicrobial activity is broad, mainly against gram-positive bacteria including oxacillin-resistant strains of *Staphylococcus aureus*, *C. difficile* and *Helicobacter pylori*.

In the treatment of infectious diarrhea, the drug is effective against a broad range of enteropathogens and uniformly against *E. Coli*, being however much less effective when invasive pathogens (e.g. *Campylobacter jejuni*) are causing fever and/or dysentery. Clinical studies, the majority preliminary or involving small samples suggest a potential role for the drug to suppress gut microflora prior to colonic surgery, to treat *C. difficile*-related colitis and *Helicobacter pylori*. Small

bowel bacterial overgrowth, inflammatory bowel diseases, hepatic encephalopathy are other potential targets. The fact that rifaximin is related to rifamycin, a compound associated with antimicrobial resistance should prompt a particular vigilance for such trends even if results of clinical trials are reassuring.

The book edited by C. Scarpignato with a number of specialists in the field provides an excellent and exhaustive review of the bulk of scientific and clinical data available for rifaximin. It also clearly presents information concerning bacteriological studies done *in vitro* and *in vivo* as well as pharmacology. The reader will also read about directions aimed at further investigating clinical efficacy of rifaximin and explore future targets of its use in clinical practice. This compiling work is a mandatory source of information for infectiologists, gastroenterologists and even surgeons who are interested in the field of gut microflora, the wide spectrum of its involvement in diseases and a newer approach to therapy.

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