

Preface to the Fourth Edition

The fourth edition of this Dictionary was necessary because of the considerable body of new knowledge concerning viruses which has accumulated since the last edition appeared in 2001. As in previous editions, the Dictionary is confined to viruses affecting vertebrates, from humans to fish, and no attempt has been made to include viruses which infect bacteria, fungi, invertebrates, or plants. Thus this book is mainly aimed at an audience of those interested in human or veterinary virology. Those needing a complete coverage of all viruses can consult the *Encyclopedia of Virology* (3rd edition, 2008) edited by BWJ Mahy and MHV van Regenmortel (Oxford: Academic Press).

Within this field the last 7 years have witnessed the emergence of numerous previously unknown viruses, such as the new human coronavirus causing severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). This disease spread rapidly around the world from its origin in China to infect more than 8000 persons, some 800 of whom died. In addition, new technological approaches have uncovered other new viruses such as the human bocavirus and the human metapneumovirus, both of which are associated with respiratory tract infections worldwide.

A further reason for this fourth edition is that the ICTV, which is the deciding body on virus nomenclature and taxonomy of the International Union of Microbiological Societies, has produced a new eighth Report, under the chairmanship of L Andrew Ball, which includes many changes and refinements, and these are reflected throughout this new edition. Many of the changes are based upon reliable nucleotide sequence analyses of viral genomes. The speed with which this information can be obtained nowadays is evident from the outbreak of SARS which was first isolated in March 2003, but even though the coronavirus genome is the largest of any RNA virus, two complete genome sequences were published by independent laboratories in Canada and US by May of that year.

As in previous editions, I have provided many references that will serve to provide easy entry into the literature. In general these have been chosen on the basis of wide coverage of the field, such as review articles, rather than first reports. Space constraints made it impossible to cite all key papers in an area, and omission of a relevant publication does not mean that it was not considered in writing the entry.

I wish to thank the many fellow virologists who provided comments or information during the preparation of this edition, especially Tom Barrett, Charles Calisher, Rosa Gualano, James Mills, Stuart Nichol, Colin Parrish, Peter Tattersall, Bill Taylor Marc van Regenmortel, Peter Walker, and Scott Weaver. If any readers wish to offer suggestions for correction or other improvement to this text, I would appreciate receiving them by e-mail to virology@bellsouth.net.

Finally, I wish to express my deepest thanks to my dear wife Penny for the great skill and dedication she was able to bring to editing this new edition.

Brian WJ Mahy
Atlanta, Georgia
USA