

BOOK REVIEWS

Practical Emergency Medicine. Greaves & Johnson. Arnold 2002. £39.99. PB. ISBN No. 0-340-80619-2.

The authors set out to fill the gap between Emergency Medicine pocketbooks and definitive textbooks. In this they have succeeded admirably. I found this extremely interesting reading and very useful. It cuts through a great deal of academic discussion and tells one what to actually do in various emergency situations. This is what is required, especially for trainees. It omits a great deal of the usual discussion and background but gives direction for further reading at the end of each section. It is well laid out and easy to read. The tables and illustrations are excellent. This is one of the most useful Emergency Medicine books I have ever read and it is ideal for Emergency Medicine trainees and GPs. It is also appropriate for senior staff as a rapid reminder and immediate use guideline resource.

I welcome the appearance of this book. It encompasses ATLS, ACLS and PALS principles within its recommendations and I was particularly impressed with regard to the authors' sensible views on ED investigations.

I would recommend, unreservedly, this book throughout the Emergency Medicine community.

Dr C MacFarlane
Johannesburg

Medical Aspects Of Harsh Environments: Volumes 1 & 2. Office of the Surgeon General United States Army 2001. **Vol 1.** HB. Illustr. Pp xi – 609. ISBN No. 0-16-051071-6. **Vol 2.** HB. Pp xi – 1204. ISBN No. -16-051184-4.

These books are the major part of a monster US Army trilogy that is the Medical Aspects of Harsh Environments (Volume 3 still to be published). They are not books you can pick up and read from front to back, but very much reference textbooks, and should be viewed in that capacity from the outset.

In over 600 pages of detail, Volume 1 covers the military aspects of operating in both hot and cold environments. The introduction to Volume 1 is not just an introduction, but a 48 page 'book within a book', going into several areas in considerable detail and having 90 references. Right from the start it is a challenging read.

This volume does not cross-reference between chapters resulting in many topics, in particular risk factors for heat injury, being repeated in several chapters, and often in the same detail. It also lacks balance. In the clinical management chapter, the immediate care section (of considerable interest to most of us) lacks any detail, offering few treatment

options and virtually no practical advice.

The second half of the book covers the cold environment and is slightly easier to read. Although well referenced, most of the recommended reading is from US Army publications and may, therefore, be difficult to access. Unfortunately it does not highlight any of the key bullet points, and you really have to search the text to extract the main issues.

Volume 2 is split into two sections, Mountain Environments and Special Environments. Mountain Environments covers much of the subject material in great depth, with plenty of physiology thrown in. Due to the expansive nature of this book, the cold environment forms a whole section of the first volume and thus barely gets any mention in this section – a major flaw. It would seem far more sensible to have put cold environments and mountain medicine together in one volume.

Special Environments is an interesting section, with chapters covering diverse and unusual subjects. As a result, there is much less of a problem of overlap compared to other parts of the book. An excellent couple of chapters relate to diving medicine and are well presented and much easier to read.

This section also includes Aviation Medicine, Space Travel (not that relevant to most of us yet), Shipboard Medicine, Motion Sickness (29 pages with a further 6 pages of references), and Special Operations. In the Special Operations chapter the text is explicitly about US Special Forces with great detail about its command and organisational structure and with a definite naval bent overall. The medicine that is presented is of limited value, particularly to those working outside the US military system. Discussion of what we would call 'Prolonged Field Care' is entirely absent, yet is a cornerstone of medical support to special operations.

These books do not make for easy reading with tightly spaced blocks of text interspersed by pages of references and 'data sources'. As such, the reviewers found the information difficult to access and think significant improvement could be made by creating a 'key points' box at the end of each chapter. This may be a useful reference text in some respects, with a very strong and current evidence base, but it is difficult to use and has very limited practical advice. Not a book for your private library.

Lt Col A McP Nicol RAMC
SMO 22 SAS, HQ Hereford Garrison,
Hereford

Maj MQ Russell RAMC
RMO 22 SAS and Honorary Lecturer in
Pre-hospital Emergency Care
Dept of General Practice, RCDM
Birmingham

Presenting Health With Powerpoint. (Includes CD Rom). Alan Gillies. Radcliffe 2003. £29.95. PB. Pp v – 191. ISBN 1-85775-973-7.

PowerPoint® presentations are an inescapable part of education in medicine, and certainly the current 'industry standard'. For those who are intimidated by or jealous of colleagues' abilities to use PowerPoint®, or are frustrated by their own ineptitude, this book offers a step by step guide to master the preparation of a slide show. The reader is encouraged to undertake activities that will result, by the end of the book, in the production of a polished presentation. Cross references are made to the contents of the enclosed CD-ROM, which also contains hyperlinks to relevant web-sites.

The Preface states the book is not for 'absolute beginners', although the first two chapters cover areas that would be familiar even to the casual PowerPoint® user. The requirement, it is said, is a PC with Microsoft Office XP – so that would be most of the NHS and MOD users excluded! (But it's actually not an absolute requirement). There is no colour in the book, only greyscale: it is not, therefore, an attractive book in comparison to the "In Easy Steps" series and other teach-yourself software manuals.

For those really serious about presentations get yourself an Apple Mac. You can still use this book with PowerPoint for Mac OSX (although not the CD), but you acquire far greater flexibility with slide-show movie production within iMovie (Quick Time movie format with slide special effects) or slide shows to music in iPhoto. These can all be played back on a PC, and through the

data projector in your Postgraduate Medical Centre, so don't be misled!

Col RJ Hodgetts L/RAMC
DCA and Professor, Emergency Medicine

ABC of Diabetes. 5th Edition. Peter J Watkins. BMJ 2003. £18.95. PB. Ppvi – 101. ISBN No. 0-7279-1693-9.

The BMJ ABC series of publications has been successful in providing basic literature in an easily digestible format and the ABC of Diabetes in its fifth edition is no exception. The publication is precisely as it describes: a practical guide to the management of diabetes and its complications and is directed at all those doctors, nurses and health professionals other than established specialists. The incidence of diabetes is on the increase and DMS doctors and nurses are expected to look after diabetics and help in the management of diabetes itself or other conditions a diabetic may have.

The book is comprehensive in describing practical aspects of daily care, it touches on complications in a systematic way without losing sight of the bigger picture of the National Service Framework standards and how to organise diabetic care. It is commendable that the publication provides resources for further education of the patient as well as the carers. Inclusion of up to date web sites is a welcome addition.

I recommend that this book is added to the libraries in medical centres throughout the Defence Medical Services.

Col AS Abdul-Aziz L/RAMC
Consultant Physician with interest in
Diabetes and Endocrinology