

### Suicidal Behavior

R McKeon. 2009  
pp viii + 96. Hogrefe & Huber €24.95  
ISBN: 978-0-88937-327-3

Acknowledging the stories, the pain and the hopes of all who have shared these with the author of this latest title in the Advances in Psychotherapy – Evidence-Based Practice series, the first page of this text likewise carries a dedication to the memory of the late United States Senator Paul David Wellstone who was a passionate champion for suicide prevention in a country where some 32,000 persons continue to die by their own hand each year. Against this may be set the WHO global estimate of one million annually, the UK total of 5,377 in 2007 and UK Armed Forces total of 550 from 1984 – 2008 (UK Defence Statistics 2009).

*"Suicide is not a disorder per se with a clear course and prognosis. . . (yet) suicide is never inevitable... there is always hope"* (p 15). Suicidal ideation may be relatively common (e.g. amongst adolescents), but acquiring the capacity for lethal self-injury is (thankfully) not. The first chapter discusses suicidal behaviour in terms of terminology, definition, differential diagnosis, epidemiology, course, prognosis, co-morbidities and assessment procedures. *"Since suicide cannot be predicted, making an assessment of risk based on available information is the expected standard of care."* Although it was recommended that a clinical interview should be combined with the use of a reliable and valid suicide assessment instrument, the recommended instruments are still subject to copyright and could not be added as an appendix, which is a useful feature of other titles in the Evidence-based Practice series.

Theories and models of suicidal behaviour are discussed in the brief second chapter with risk assessment and treatment planning following in the third. The most important point is "that treatment planning for individuals at risk for suicide should directly target the individual's suicide risk." Although risk and protective factors were discussed, it is often helpful to distinguish between static and dynamic risk factors, where the latter would guide intervention. It was also not made explicit that protective factors should be judged against hazards, which is of particular relevance in the military context.

Treatment is discussed in the fourth chapter recommending a multiphase model with suicidal behaviour being the primary target of therapy during the initial phase. The section on crisis intervention and the management of acute risk starts off with a very useful "Checklist for being prepared for psychiatric emergencies," which every senior medical officer and practice manager at a military medical centre should have on hand, because it makes no reference to the use of generic mental health teams (or Departments of Community Mental Health). Although hospital admission is often the outcome for military patients at imminent or serious risk of suicide, the "Family Involvement checklist" on p. 54 can be used to guide commanding officers when formulating care action plans to manage suicide risk vulnerability. Of particular relevance are: "Reducing Perceived Burdensomeness" and "Failed Belongingness." The latter describes the need for meaningful social relationships amongst isolated and suicidal persons.

There is also a short but fascinating description on p. 72. of the controversy surrounding the association of SSRIs with suicidal behaviour, which first came to prominence in the UK. The use of medication in suicidal behaviour should be monitored carefully, which applies to every other treatment intervention used in the context of suicidality. Problems in carrying out treatments ends the fourth chapter with a number of very important clinical caveats.

Case vignettes, a bibliography and two practical appendices on suicide consultations and a decision tree for intervening with

suicidal callers complete the book. Definitely a text for the GP Registrar and Occupational StR to be aware of - suicide amongst Service personnel has formed the subject of at least one successful MFOM dissertation. Experienced mental health professionals would also find it useful, especially when reflecting on a "near miss" or when supervising the practice of others.

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### Britain's Gurkhas

C Bullock 2009  
pp318 3rd Millenium  
Publishing, £45  
Hardback  
ISBN 9781906507275

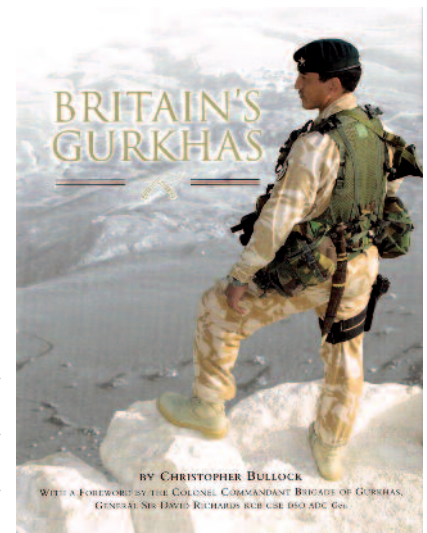
This book brings works on the Gurkhas up to date. I served under Brigadier Bullock and admired him. He has put his lifetime of experience and other resources of the Brigade of Gurkhas to work here: Visible are the hands of Senior ex-Gurkhas, a strong Museum team and their archives.

This falls between well illustrated coffee table book and deeper work for the serious reader. It may be just too bulky for bed time reading, but is not over-sized. At 320 pages it is a thorough presentation of the Gurkhas in British Service. I liked the first chapters on Nepal's early history up to East India Company relations, and later on, the relationship's evolution is well covered. Then come the famous names from history: However few of the equally impressive but less well remembered campaigns are missed. The many years of involvement in Baluchistan and Afghanistan have an extra poignancy now. There are two anecdotal accounts in the Appendices (Italy 1944 and Indonesia 1945-6) that are thought provoking: Not all lessons are from what you expect; the 26 VCs are certainly not given undue prominence. It gives readable and detailed accounts all the way up to May 2009's developments with Joanna Lumley, Op Herrick and even flood defences in UK.

If I have one reservation, it is with the last 3 chapters: New Horizon, New Millennium and Into Battle, which mix up the outlook: They do try to collate the variety in the recent high tempo era. It is not so easy to convey the current feel towards the future, even when part of it. That apart: It has a good index; it has a wonderful selection of photos from the Museum Archives, some of them iconic; it has a valuable bibliography, some I hadn't seen before. I am glad to have this on my shelves: It is the best of the books I have on the subject.

If you liked this you may like Bruce Niven 'Mountain Kingdom' (mostly pictorial) and Philip Mason 'A Matter of Honour - An account of the Indian Army' (more historical and pre-1947); neither are in the bibliography.

Major C E G Richards RAMC (Late RGR)



## Training In Obstetrics and Gynaecology – The essential curriculum

I Sarris, S Bewley, S Agnihotri. 2009  
Pp428. Oxford University Press. £39.99  
Softback. ISBN 978-0-19-921847-9

This book provides the Obstetric and Gynaecology trainee with a clear, concise textbook which succeeds in forming a thorough knowledge base for practice in the early years of specialty training. By mirroring the core curriculum and logbook this enables the reader to focus their learning on the most relevant and salient points for day to day work.

Each problem is explained from first principles including pathophysiology, diagnosis, investigation and management enabling the clinician to develop a thorough understanding from which to base their training. Where an evidence base exists for recommendations these are highlighted with A-C based on their strength and links are published should the reader want to research the topic further through sources such as the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. The textbook is set out in a reader friendly format in which each condition or problem has a dedicated two page layout. Key factual knowledge and principles are interspersed with tables, graphs and diagrams. Technical skill boxes explain common procedures thus enabling the reader to become familiar with clinical skills before attempting these practically. Photographs and radiological images occur throughout the book thereby enhancing its readability and content.

In keeping with the new curriculum a separate section on Case Based Discussion is included allowing trainees to work through some example cases before discussing others with consultants at work. The book incorporates a chapter relating to non-clinical skills such as ethics and legal issues, enabling the reader to become experienced and comfortable with these issues now such an integral part of Obstetrics and Gynaecology.

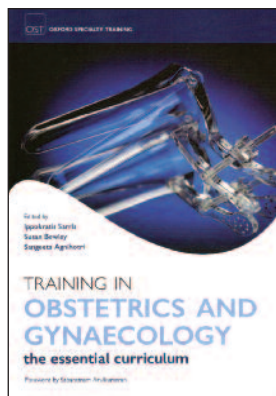
This book is an ideal text for those in their initial phase of specialty training providing a comprehensive overview of each key topic in the core curriculum. However, in some topics it lacks the detail required for a trainee approaching the later stages of their studies. When compared to other texts of its type and breadth a suggested retail price of £39.99 represents very good value and will serve as an invaluable tool for trainees entering specialty training.

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## Lamentations

R Whelan 2009  
pp156 Authorhouse Publishing £6.50  
Paperback. ISBN 9781438970936

Having seen nearly ten years of conflict since the siege of Gorazde there have been many accounts of life at the front line from a number of different



viewpoints, from Special Forces soldiers, through Apache pilots, snipers, EOD operatives to the 'poor bloody infantryman' right at the sharp end. It was only a matter of time before a Doctor should get in on the act.

It is unfortunate then that this book should have been published to compete with the other accounts of heroism, gritty realism and adventure because it has none of these qualities. What we are presented with is an account of Regimental Doctor who appears to be mired in self doubt and self pity. I can understand the need for some cathartic writing to lance the boil of his time in Gorazde, which I have no doubt was truly unpleasant in many respects, but this book does nothing to record the triumphs that military doctors often achieve in similar austere circumstances and would have been better left unpublished.

His account of his relationship between himself and his Commanding Officer, and indeed all figures of authority, are meant to read, I assume, like a lone voice crying out for justice and compassion, railing against a wicked authoritarian machine. Instead they sound like the author has missed the point of being part of the Military family. There is nothing truly romantic or brave about disobeying orders for self gratification as he appears to do on his return to Sarajevo. Neither is there anything heroic in his ultimate treatment of Suada.

The style is also almost unreadable with an over liberal use of "inverted commas" which add nothing to the flow of a very stilted work. There are numerous spelling, grammatical and punctuation errors which may well be the result of using a "vanity" publishing house rather than a traditional one, although I suspect no established publisher would have taken this work on.

In summary, this book adds nothing to the understanding of a Military doctor's role in such an awful situation, and whilst it may well have performed as catharsis for the author, it has little to recommend it to anyone trying to understand the internal conflicts of a British Army doctor faced with the consequences of deployment in these areas of conflict.

Lamentations? Lamentable.

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## Textbook of Hyperbaric Medicine, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition.

Jain K K . 2009.  
pp xiv+ 578. Hogrefe & Huber US \$199.00, €143.95,  
ISBN: 978-0-88937-361-7

Now in its fifth edition this well-known text follows a similar and perhaps somewhat well-worn, layout and content to its predecessors. This is not to say that the fifth edition does not provide the reader with recent updates in most of the clinical areas where hyperbaric oxygenation (HBO) is used – it does – but the book does not clearly distinguish between today's various collegial positions on which clinical conditions are considered objectively mainstream for HBO treatment. In many cases such as conditions specified by the Undersea and Hyperbaric Medical Society as objectively benefiting from HBO, reimbursement from health insurers is possible; the opposite applies to those which remain experimental which are usually financed from the patient's or their family's own means.

The Type I and Type II classification of bends – derived from Haldane's clinical observations on caisson workers in which only Type II cases were originally considered to require treatment, continues to be the author's preferred choice. Although still used in aviation medicine to classify decompression sickness incurred at altitude the protean manifestations of decompression sickness in divers (which form by far the majority of cases) have led other



experts in the field, notably Professor D Gorman of New Zealand, to abandon this classification in favour of a standardized system of description of symptoms and signs in each case. This is because the aetiology of decompression disorders is frequently difficult to define and decompression sickness (DCS) and arterial gas embolism (AGE) are often difficult to distinguish. The author's assertion that this proposed system "is not widely accepted" (p 88) is questionable.

Nevertheless the text continues to lead the field in its descriptions of the diversity of conditions which have apparently benefited from HBO treatment. Ethical considerations in using HBO for unproven conditions (p153) are clearly described and would provide food for thought for any member of a research ethics committee, and the section on Imaging and HBO (p 506) gives the reader insights in this developing area of work. The measurement of intracellular pO<sub>2</sub> has apparently only been reliably accomplished with microelectrodes inserted into preparations of the giant neurons of *Aplysia* species (a marine gastropod) (p 70) so the equivalent technology for mammalian – especially human – cells is still awaited. One or two misprints are present such as "the prevalence of pulmonary barotrauma in these centers. . ." (p 77) Lamm and Pilgramm's studies at the Ulm Bundeswehr Krankenhaus in Bavaria on the value of HBO in treating sudden onset sensorineural deafness in adults remain pertinent to anyone with an interest in this area, although a recent change of management at the ENT Department concerned has apparently now halted this programme.

Provided the book is read critically its contents will inform and, on occasions, inspire the reader who is prepared to consider the place of HBO in specified acute and chronic conditions. The forewords by Professors Edward Teller and James Toole remain relevant - 'the decade of HBO' having indeed come. The bibliography is comprehensive and clear. Definitely an edition to be accessed by the Defence Medical Library Service, but less so for individual practitioners apart from those who have a specialist interest in the area.

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## The Oxford Handbook of Expedition and Wilderness Medicine

C Johnson, S Anderson, J Dallimore, S Winser, D Warrell. 2009  
pp710. Oxford University Press. £31.30  
Softback. ISBN 978-0-19-929661-3

Periodically, a seminal publication comes along that re-defines an outdoor subject. From my outdoors library examples include Langmuir's Mountaincraft and Leadership, Ward, Milledge and West's High Altitude Medicine and Physiology and Ray Mears' Bushcraft. Now add to this list the new OUP Handbook of Expedition & Wilderness Medicine.

Practicing medicine in remote, challenging environments with limited resources is a fundamental principle of wilderness medicine. However, planning and preparation, preventative medicine and group management are of equal importance to improvisation due to limited medical resources and evacuation of incapacitated personnel. In the RAMC, we practice wilderness medicine on a day-to-day basis

whilst overseas, whether on operations, exercises or adventure training. Wilderness medicine encompasses all military medicine – however the high incidence of trauma on high tempo current operations does set them more apart than in peacetime. Yet, whilst ballistic trauma is not common on expeditions, it does occur and certainly blunt trauma from road traffic collisions is a relatively common occurrence on many expeditions (158 deaths in UK travellers in 2002).

With the shared fundamental principles of wilderness and military medicine, the OUP Handbook is a 'must have' for the deploying Regimental Medical Officer who will, at some stage in their career, find themselves in a remote setting without much immediate medical support wondering how to manage a broken tooth or a frost nipped nose. This concise and portable book has many of those answers and so is extremely relevant to the requirements of the deployed primary care physician. Whilst primarily for doctors, this book has been written with other health care providers in mind who will glean much knowledge and inspiration from the text that is refreshingly devoid of excessive medical jargon. There is enough theory but the majority of the text is devoted to practical management of commonly faced medical problems. There are numerous practical tips, diagrams and multiple web links if more information on a subject is required.

The co-editors and contributing authors (of whom several are current military doctors) have achieved a remarkable 710 page publication. It is compact enough to fit into a rucksack pocket and is suitable for professional medics and the keen amateur. As always, the OUP house style is easy to digest. Twenty three chapters are laid out in short paragraphs or headings followed by bullet points throughout discussing all problems from dentistry to psychiatry and infectious diseases to field anaesthesia. It took nearly three years to bring the handbook to print.

The book is a sign of how vibrant the UK's expedition scene is. Today, thousands of gap students, university researchers, overland drivers, yachtsmen, climbers, rowers, cyclists and other highly motivated explorers depart the UK for the mountains (41%), tropical places (33%) or marine, polar and desert regions in pursuit of their dreams. The days of ill-prepared, bumbling Brits abroad are fast fading. There is unprecedented access to specialised training, information and the best equipment, advice and technology ever available. In the RAMC, we have much experience of wilderness medicine that can be passed on to our more UK based colleagues but the OUP handbook will still serve as a concise aide memoire.

The foreword, written by Sir Ranulph Fiennes, the greatest explorer of his generation, stresses the importance of the medical planning and input to his many exploits. Only 50 years ago, expeditions paid cursory disregard to medicine, but a modern expedition would be foolish, if not negligent, in not being trained and equipped to deal with the likely medical problems they might face. Although expeditions are undoubtedly safer (only one death per 41,500 journeys and one to three deaths a year related to expedition travel) they need not be sanitised. As the OUP handbook editors profess; "*correctly practised, expedition medicine should not constrain the enthusiasms and ambitions [of expeditions], but by anticipating preventable medical problems, facilitate the achievements and enjoyment of all participants.*"

The OUP handbook of wilderness and expedition medicine is a practical and portable guide to the prevention and treatment of those medical problems most likely to be encountered in extreme environments.

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