BOOK REVIEWS

Accident and Emergency Medicine

By D. H. WILSON & MICHAEL W. FLOWERS

Butterworths, London. 1985. 256 pp. £13.95.

Accident and Emergency Handbook is the direct descendent of Morris Ellis' *The Casualty Officers Handbook* and is a short, practical guide for the future senior house officer in accident and emergency.

Its main strength is as an introductory book to be read by the senior house officer before he actually takes up his post, because it guides the reader into not only how to cope with specific problems but also how to generally work in the department. Perhaps, in places, it spends too much time on this introduction, because what is required, once the doctor has taken up his post, is a reference book to which he can quickly refer with ease in the middle of the night.

The main problem with this book is that it does not adequately cover the medical, as opposed to surgical, spectrum of the work. In particular, the advice on cardio-pulmonary resuscitation is both out of date and inadequate. All new doctors in accident and emergency departments need to be referred to the Resuscitation Council's guidelines which have recently been described in detail in the *British Medical Journal*. Further, it does not adequately cover how to cope with the various arrhythmias which are met with in the accident and emergency department. There is no escape from the necessity of discussing the basic details of the common changes in electrocardiograms. There is also an inadequate description on how to cope with the very common problem of chest pain query cause.

The chapters on injuries do give adequate and appropriate guidelines, remembering that what is pertinent is the immediate care, not the on-going management.

In summary, this book is to be recommended to be read by doctors going to take up a post in the accident and emergency department but does have its inadequacies as a handbook, pocket or otherwise.

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Mosby's Comprehensive View of Critical Care, Third Edition

Edited by DONNA A. ZSCHOCHÉ. Blackwell Scientific Publications, Oxford. 1986. 1000 pp. £30.50.

This book is the third edition of what is described as a 'multiple organ approach to

critical care'. It is an American multi-author review with 63 contributors ranging from clinical nurse specialists to professors of surgery and medicine.

The text is almost entirely composed of questions and answers which causes some irritation on first reading but does, in fact, make one concentrate and be more critical of the subject. Some of the questions are rather oddly phrased, for example, 'What about pancreatic pseudocysts and abscesses?' The book covers a vast range of topics from paediatric hypertension to hepatic encephalopathy and the slice, whilst being broad, is not necessarily thin in parts. For example, ten pages are devoted to the use of hyperbaric oxygen therapy in a variety of conditions. Perhaps this merely reflects the inevitably strong transatlantic flavour, although I am not sure that crush injury with acute traumatic ischaemia is an accepted indication for hyperbaric oxygen therapy in the UK.

Other parts, however, cover important topics in a rather skimpy manner, for example, drowning occupies one page and does rather beg the question as to who the book is directed at, particularly in the UK market. Critical care covers a wide spectrum of disease and its management, be it in the accident and emergency department, the intensive therapy unit or the coronary care unit, and I am not sure that such a diversity of subjects can or needs to be encompassed in one volume. The chapters are, however, generally well-written and concise and it would be a useful book to have handy for reference in any of these departments where care of the critically ill is undertaken.

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