salient features, and a word or two of caution. It is a comprehensively written book and well presented, but there are differences between the British and American ways of practising emergency medicine and they are reflected here. The new material in the second edition contains chapters on environmental emergency, oral and dental emergencies, and trauma severity scoring systems. The chapter on cardiac arrest has been revised, as have some of the tables and charts. The flow charts are easy to follow and the diagrams are clear. At the end of every chapter, there is a useful bibliography for further reference.

This 486-page book is described for medical students and junior doctors coming to the emergency departments for the first time. It could be used as a brief reference book, but I think medical students will find it hard to buy it at a price of £34.80. In my opinion, it is a book worth keeping in your emergency department for day-to-day practise and quick reference.

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Handbook of Poisoning

By R. H. DREISBACH & W. O. ROBERTSON

Appleton & Lange, Norwalk, Connecticut. 1987. 589 pp. £14.70 (\$20.65).

This well-known book is one of the standard American texts on the management of poisoning, first published in 1955. It contains an enormous amount of information on acute poisoning with drugs, chemicals, and animal and plant toxins. It also covers chronic poisoning, and problems such as carcinogenic chemicals and silicosis.

Much of the information and advice is sound, but there are unfortunate lapses which detract from the book's value to the students and doctors for which it is intended. When managing an unconscious patient one is advised to start a drip and give intravenous fluids before maintaining the patient's airway and ventilation. It is incorrect to state that, 'succinylcholine is the most powerful of the anticonvulsants'. Poisoned patients who are hyperactive or delirious should apparently be treated with hot baths ('33–36°C for 30 minute periods or longer') and 'wet packs' ('administered only by trained personnel'). Drugs advised for delirium and mania include rectal paraldehyde '8–32 mm in 2 volumes of vegetable oil'. I have never used these techniques, but I doubt if they would be acceptable and effective.

I would not recommend this book as the first source of information on poisons but it could be useful for the more obscure poisons not mentioned in other texts. The authors state that this twelfth edition reflects the latest procedures in use in emergency rooms and poisons centres. I hope that this claim will be justified in the thirteenth edition of this book but considerable revision will be needed.

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