BOOK REVIEWS

Burns and their Treatment, Third Edition

By I. F. K. MUIR, T. L. BARCLAY & J. A. D. SETTLE

Butterworths, London. 1987. 178 pp. £25.00.

Patients with burns are a very common presentation in the accident and emergency (A&E) department. This book, in its third edition, is written by three eminent authors in this field of medicine. It covers the full spectrum of burns in great detail from pathophysiology to the clinical management in both the acute and subsequent stages.

How useful is it for the accident unit staff? There are a number of chapters of relevance to A & E doctors, both junior and senior. The authors have tried to explain the pathophysiology of this complex condition in very clear and simple terms, thereby making it easier to understand the rationale for the fluid requirement in the resuscitation period.

The monitoring of the patient using relevant clinical and investigative parameters throughout the resuscitation period is discussed extensively. The various types of fluids used have been analyzed and treatment of choice described. Only one formula for fluid replacement, as used by the authors in their units, is described and no reference is made to various other formulae used in other burns units in the country. This may make it difficult for A & E staff in those other regions to understand the requirements of their relevant units. There are good descriptions of local treatment, first aid, and criteria for selection of burns for outpatient care and triaging larger numbers of burns in a single major incident. Burns of special areas, and special types of burns and their appropriate management are clearly outlined. The management of inhalation burns is mentioned in this chapter, but these burns are the major cause of fatalities in modern-day house fires and, also, in war time, so they warrant a complete chapter to deal with the mechanism of action, pathology and specialized treatment.

There are chapters on inpatient management, nutritional requirement, early excision and grafting, and treatment of scar contracture. These would be of interest to one wishing to specialize in this field or for one preparing for the Fellowship examination.

The authors have provided short summaries at the end of the main chapters which I find quite useful. There are extensive references for further reading.

This is a well-written book and I can recommend it as a suitable addition to an accident and emergency departmental library.

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