Paediatric Emergencies

Edited by J. A. BLACK

Butterworths, London. 1987. 940pp. £70.00.

The second edition of *Paediatric Emergencies* is a welcome update of an extremely useful publication. It is intended for use as a reference book in general paediatric departments, accident and emergency departments, and neonatal units. An enormous range of material is covered from respiratory arrest to recognition of the rare inborn areas of metabolism. Over 150 pages of data are contained in a separate appendix and this information is of value to all of those involved in the care of children, not just in the emergency situation.

Some of the contents seemed to be of uncertain value for children; for example, the nomogram for evaluation of creatinine clearance is more applicable to adults. Nevertheless, there has been considerable updating in many of the chapters which include such recent phenomena as the ingestion of button batteries and solvent abuse.

There are detailed chapters on child abuse which should be compulsory reading for any doctor examining children in an accident and emergency department. The chapter on sexual abuse in children emphasizes the forensic aspects of diagnosis and gives clear guidelines for dealing with a controversial subject.

There are new chapters on the recognition of brain death, and the management of acute liver failure and of raised intracranial pressure. A number of new authors have also appeared in the second edition.

The editor has made a determined effort to include a number of tropical conditions, together with a section on oral rehydration therapy which are designed to appeal to the overseas' reader. However, some of the conditions are now being imported into the UK with increasing frequency and it is relevant to include such up-to-date information on tropical emergencies within this edition.

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The Duchess of York Children's Hospital,
Manchester, England**Essentials of Emergency Medicine**

By DOUGLAS A. RUND

Appleton-Century-Croft, New Jersey. 1987. 486 pp. £34.80.

Essentials of Emergency Medicine was published in its second edition in January 1987. It was written by Douglas Lund, who is a known author on emergency medicine in the United States of America. This is one of many books available in American literature on emergency medicine and it is described as the book 'written for someone just beginning to participate in the clinical workings of an emergency department'. It is written in 27 chapters, the first being on triage, stabilization and decision making, and the rest dealing with the causation of disease, examination, investigations and management. The chapters start with a general introduction and end up with five or six lines of summary. In this last paragraph, the author has summarized the subject extremely well giving

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 ml 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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