Book Reviews

A Colour Atlas of Mountain Medicine

The past two decades have seen an enormous increase in the number of people undertaking both recreational and sporting activities in the mountainous regions of the world. This in turn has led to a rise in the numbers of medically related conditions seen, and an increasing number of books have been written on the all embracing subject of mountain medicine. The latest is the publication by Wolfe Publishing Ltd of A Colour Atlas of Mountain Medicine which expands further their series of highly successful atlases. In producing this book the editors have drawn on the experience of many of the eminent authorities in this field of medicine from throughout the world.

The first chapter is an excellent and concise review of the early scientific expeditions to high altitude and this is followed by an extensive chapter entitled 'Mountain Rescue Today'. This catalogues the Swiss experience and promotes the widespread use of helicopters (as used in the European Alps) and is particularly apposite for the situation in the UK where helicopters are used less frequently, and with the present financial constraints on the RAF this service may well be reduced further — a cause of great concern to all involved. Also included in this chapter is advice on medical treatment at the scene, how to raise the rescue alarm and how to help land a helicopter, as well as notes on meteorology. I found the suggested list of medical equipment to be carried informative and it has an appropriate acronym, the GRIMM action pack! Following this chapter the book is divided into two Parts. Part I is entitled 'Climatic Conditions and Associated Pathologies' and Part II is entitled 'Traumatology and Mountain Sports'.

Part I is subdivided into several sections. The first deals with various aspects of altitude which, in addition to the usual spectrum of physiology and pathophysiology, also includes a chapter on training for high-altitude climbing. The next section deals with Solar Radiation which I found highly informative, and this is followed by a section entitled 'Cold' with chapters from French and American experts which, although a little repetitive, are highly recommended. There is a section on 'Ice and Snow' which includes personal experiences of an avalanche and a chapter on avalanches and their mechanisms (are these medicine?), and a final section on 'Lightning'.

Part II has sections on musculoskeletal injuries related to hiking, trekking, downhill skiing and mountaineering (including sports climbing, caving and paragliding).

While reading this book I found myself frequently considering the definition of an atlas which is 'a book of maps, plates or charts'. This publication contains more text than is traditionally found in an atlas, however, the nature of the subjects covered often require more than pictures or figures to convey their message. There are also good examples of the atlas concept including the chapters on high altitude cerebral oedema and retinopathy which portray their message with clarity though the liberal use of photographs, and several case studies in the frostbite section make good use of photographs. As mentioned there is some repetition of information, though, given the numbers of contributors, the editors have obviously worked hard to ensure that it does not occur frequently. As this is a book on mountain medicine, and aspects of trekking are discussed, I was surprised that no mention was made of the more general health problems found in the trekking population, especially relating to the gastrointestinal tract. In addition, more children are being taken into the mountains and I believe a chapter devoted to their specific problems would have been beneficial.

With such a diverse number of subjects covered (some of which have little or no 'hard medicine' in their text) who should purchase this book? The book maintains the high standards of presentation set by the 'Atlas' series and for all those with an interest in the mountains it provides many thought provoking comments on safety issues. Many doctors active in the various mountain disciplines covered within this book (myself included) will glean new information from its pages, and the less medically intense aspects may attract the non-medical mountaineering population. Much of the up-to-date infor-
mation will be useful for hospital staff who receive patients on an occasional basis with injuries sustained as the result of an accident in the mountains. Finally, with the increase in training undertaken by individuals for hard rock-climbing and sport climbing, sports injuries clinics will find the chapter on the management of the resulting injuries valuable.

A.A. TOMLINSON
Consultant Anaesthetist, Department of Anaesthetics, City General, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire

Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation

This pocket-size book covers all the essential aspects of adult cardiopulmonary resuscitation in a very readable fashion. In addition the management of cardiac emergencies associated with special circumstances, myocardial infarction and paediatric resuscitation are described. Post-resuscitation care, bereavement and acid base abnormalities are also covered briefly.

Each chapter is laid out logically with all, but one, starting with a summary of the key points. The whole text is informative with ‘resuscitation in hospital’, ‘management of acute myocardial infarc-
tion’ and ‘management of common arrhythmias’ providing excellent descriptions of the respective topics.

The new European Resuscitation Council Guidelines for adult advanced life support are used, but not for basic life support. This may lead to some confusion. Similarly the paediatric protocols for both advanced and basic life support are not the latest recommendations.

My main concern about the book relates to what has been left out. In particular the descriptions of practical procedures such as basic airway management, defibrillation and thoracotomy could benefit from additional diagrams or text. However, this may not be a fair criticism because the authors do state that the aim of the book is to provide ‘theoretical knowledge’.

Apart from this point I have only minor suggestions to make for this otherwise excellent book. There are two misprints (‘bed’ instead of ‘lead’ on page 79 and 35 m.Eq/l instead of 3.5 m.Eq/l for potassium on page 148), one point of inconsistency with regard to the resuscitation team structure, a recommended list of cases for internal cardiac massage which are questionable and the term ‘drowning’ used when ‘near drowning’ would be more appropriate.

P.A. DRISCOLL
Senior Lecturer in Accident and Emergency Medicine, Hope Hospital, Salford M6 8HD