
This book is a little gem for the practitioners for whom it has been produced: accident and emergency (A&E) senior house officers, emergency nurse practitioners, and general practitioners. I know because they have recommended it to me and what follows is a distillation of their views.

This is a very useful pocket reference book that is full of the "bread and butter" problems with which patients attend A&E departments and minor injuries units.

For many junior doctors or nurses the bewildering variety of relatively "minor" conditions facing them can be unsettling or challenging, being poorly described or absent from A&E textbooks, perhaps being thought of as too trivial to include. These conditions are of course very important to the patient, so the ability swiftly to diagnose, manage, and advise does wonders to reassure them and maintain their confidence.

The book's 182 pages are divided into four sections covering wounds and wound care, minor trauma, minor medical conditions, and managerial matters. The layout is very good which allows for quick reference; in less than one minute it is possible to glean enough knowledge to allow confident diagnosis, careful exclusion of more serious or life threatening conditions, and sensible management strategies with clear advice for patients in the majority of cases. Key points to look out for or points of interest are listed for each condition, helping to differentiate patients who can safely be treated and sent home from those who are more likely to need admission or further investigation. There are no diagrams or photos but I think this is better for that — easier to read, and of course it keeps the price down!

The book is very comprehensive, covering all manner of wounds with advice on skin closure techniques and after care. General principles are followed by discussion of more difficult wounds (intrasural or pretrial laceraions). The vast majority—if not all—of the minor ailments seen are included.

Lacking in this book is a more in-depth approach such that the more experienced A&E senior house officer or nurse practitioner will feel stretched at times. Occasionally it is too specific—for example it has no section on "red eye" but only separate ones on conjunctivitis and arc eye, leaving out more worrying conditions such as iritis. Also for brevity some conditions are not covered in enough detail, such as headache.

I was glad to see a section on violence and aggression even if it was at the end rather than the beginning of the book, as this is a huge problem in A&E departments now.

Overall this is an excellent pocket book. I would expect it to be well thumbed through out the first few weeks of an A&E job. How clever for an academic general practitioner and two A&E consultants to tailor their information so perfectly for their proposed readership.


The effective relief of pain has always been a primary aim of medical care but it is often poorly managed despite increasing knowledge of pain pathophysiology, and the development of new drugs and drug delivery systems.

Management of Acute and Chronic Pain consists of a series of reviews written by an international panel of specialists. The book has introductory chapters on the anatomy, physiology, and pharmacology of pain followed by separate sections on the treatment of postoperative and obstetric pain. The management of acute paediatric pain, chronic low back pain, and cancer pain is also covered.

The authors demonstrate an enthusiasm for their subject and attention is given to the clinical, organisational, and clinical risk issues of pain management. The book is well referenced except for the introductory chapters, which disappointed by providing only a limited selected reading list. Multiauthor texts produce challenges for the editor in ensuring consistency of style, presentation, and content. In general these chapters are consistent.

There is some repetition between chapters and a few typographical errors of drug dosage units need correcting.

It is a pity that the book does not contain a chapter dedicated to the management of pain in emergency medicine. A brief mention is given to the use of the femoral block in children with a fractured femoral shaft but otherwise references to the management of acute trauma pain are limited. The chapter on chronic low back pain will be of interest to accident and emergency specialists.

The book will be of value to trainee anaesthetists and intensivists and those with a special interest in pain management.

KAREN ILLINGWORTH


How quickly the memory fades. Five years since I left general medicine to join those at the front door and already the inner sanctum of the hospital has been lost to me. Or how swiftly the practice of medicine is evolving and