Use of cut endotracheal tubes should be avoided in the initial resuscitation of the burned patient

The use of cut endotracheal tubes is already a contentious issue amongst anaesthetists.1 We wish to point out a potentially life threatening hazard when they are used in the emergency department during the initial resuscitation of the thermally injured patient.

Often these patients are intubated early if there is any indication of inhalational injury or facial burns. This is because subsequent oedema of the face and larynx can compromise the airway2 and render intubation difficult or impossible.

If a cut endotracheal tube has been used to secure the airway in this situation and there is subsequent facial or airway swelling, the proximal end of the endotracheal tube may become positioned within the oropharynx making access to it difficult. Worse still, if proximally secured, the distal end may become dislodged from the larynx. At this stage it may be extremely difficult to re-intubate the patient or exchange the tube for a longer one.

As these patients are often transferred to specialist burns units, the consequences of not being able to secure the airway in this situation can be catastrophic.

As a tertiary referral centre for burns we wish to point out a potentially life threatening hazard when they are used in the emergency department during the initial resuscitation of the thermally injured patient.

References
1 Moyser LV. To cut or not to cut. Anaesthesia 1992;48:832

Pediatric procedural sedation and analgesia


As all who deal with children are well aware, over the past 10 years it has become unacceptable to physically restrain children for painful and non-painful procedures. There have been changes to the law with the Children’s Act and the recent Human Right’s Act to further constrain us and tie our own hands, alongside a growing demand from parents and children that a more humane approach is needed. This means we have to replace physical with pharmacological restraint.

This book is an American multi-authored text edited by an anaesthetist and an emergency physician from Boston Children’s Hospital. It claims to contain everything you wanted to know about sedation in children but were afraid to ask—and it does. It is well written and easy to read. It gives tons of information on drugs and techniques, occasionally dropping into the text real life horror stories of sedation mismanagement, just to make sure we treat these techniques with the respect they deserve. The book is divided into three sections looking at scientific foundations, general management principles, and finally sedation for non-elective procedures.

The first two sections of the book are excellent. They extensively cover the physiology and pharmacology of sedatives and analgesics and discuss issues of consent, assessment, how to monitor these patients for adverse events and how to determine adequate recovery. The last section of the book advocates using sedation for many procedures that in the UK would automatically be done under general anaesthesia. This probably reflects a difference in culture and financial constraints on the two sides of the Atlantic. My main criticisms of the book are that like all multi-authored texts it is a little repetitive (but not excessively). Some of the drugs recommended are not available in this country (ketamine, sufentanil), and some may be unavailable in the United States (Ametop) which serve in addition to emphasise and underline the experience of the authors.

The chapters are logical in their sequence and offer a stepwise guide through decision making and practical procedures in emergency airway management. They have clearly been written by people sympathetic to the needs of adult learners. Examples of this include the airway algorithms, which are clear, binary and linked together seamlessly; the mnemonics which are few and easily remembered; the tips and pearls section at the end of many of the chapters (which serve in addition to emphasise and underline the experience of the authors).

Some differences in practice between North America and the United Kingdom are apparent.

Advance the overall safety of sedation in children, which it goes a long way towards. Although distraction and relaxation are mentioned as techniques of enhancing or avoiding pharmacological restraint, it has little of the theory or description of their use. The differing backgrounds of the two editors has resulted in a book that has a wider appeal, and should not be regarded as just for anaesthetists or accident and emergency physicians. It fills an important gap in the market and is eminently affordable.
contrast between the roles and the relationships of emergency physicians and anaesthetists on either side of the Atlantic. These differences are most usefully seen as a trigger for reflective debate rather than as a reason to view the book as not applicable to UK practice. It most certainly is applicable to UK practice and would be useful reading for every trainee in anaesthesia, ITU, and accident and emergency.

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The clinical practice of medicine, 3rd edn

While it is often said that those that can, do, and those that can’t, teach, one gets the impression that the authors of this textbook and those that can’t, teach, one gets the impression that the authors of this textbook haven’t written a textbook in 2001. It is written for the non-medical audience and draws on the author’s considerable experience of trauma and illness in childhood. It is suggested reading for parents, grandparents, and carers of children.

The book is divided into two main sections termed “Non-age related injuries”, which includes cars, fires, and toys, and “Age related injuries” including infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers, and school age children and the types of injuries that specifically befall them. The third part is a list of American product recalls and child safety resources such as the Farm Safety Association.

Although a lot of the general points are made well, there are two main problems with the book. The first is that this is essentially a book for an American readership concerning American products and relating to the American healthcare system. Therefore, it would be of less value in Europe. The second is the negative tone throughout the book rendering any spontaneity or adventure in childrearing almost impossible.

It is a book to be read in conjunction with Swallows and Amazons to provide a balanced view of the dangers of childhood. While not wishing to minimise how great these are, it is also true that books such as these can scare parents, grandparents, and carers into timidity themselves and an inability for their charges to explore or have any fun.

In short, a book to read but possibly not to re-read, for every zealous parent.

This book is intended for carers and is not a required addition for a medical library or for the EMJ readership.

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NOTICES

Reducing waits in A&E: search for evidence

The University of Warwick are conducting a systematic literature review of the evidence for interventions aimed to reduce waiting time (total time in A&E, wait to see a doctor, wait for results, wait for admission, “trolley wait”) and attendance in accident and emergency departments. This project is funded by the Department of Health. If you have undertaken any such innovations and have audited or evaluated the changes (or are aware of anyone who has done so) then please contact Dr Matthew Cooke, Project Lead, Centre for Primary Health Care Studies, School of Health and Social Studies, The University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7AL, UK; m.w.cooke@warwick.ac.uk.

Medic 1 Trust Fellowship

The Medic 1 Trust Fellowship is awarded to facilitate education or research in the field of accident and emergency medicine and may be used for associated travel. The fellowship is awarded to a doctor or nurse currently working in the field of accident and emergency medicine. The value of the award will be a maximum of £2500. A maximum of one medical scholarship and one nursing scholarship will be made every year. Applications must be received by 28 February 2003. For further information, please write to: Chairman of the Medic 1 Trust, c/o Maclay Murray & Spens Solicitors, 151 Vincent Street, Glasgow, G2 5NJ.