

BOOK REVIEWS

Cardiac arrest: the science and practice of resuscitation medicine

Edited by N Paradis, H Halperin, K Kern, V Wenzel, D Chamberlain. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2007, pp 1338, hardback, £110. ISBN 9780521847001.

This 1338 page textbook, coming 10 years since the first edition, presents a contemporary evidence base for virtually every intervention and aspect of resuscitation medicine. It is aimed at “clinicians who wish to practise both the science and the art of resuscitation medicine”.

International recommendations for resuscitation are now updated every 5 years. The last update to the guidelines was in 2005 and this book delivers an extremely comprehensive and thorough rationale behind this guidance. The editors and chapter authors are established and respected experts at an international level and are integral participants in the guidelines review process.

Guidelines are updated as a result of new therapies, better research, simplification and standardisation. It is likely therefore that there will be further changes in 2010, by which time this book will be out of date. It does, however, pull together a baseline of where we are now to provide, as the editors state, “a foundation upon which (resuscitation medicine) may advance”.

The first gut feeling on opening this book is the sheer wealth of expertise and knowledge that the authors are sharing with us. The second gut feeling is how incredibly wordy this book is! The fact that it takes 40 pages to reach the introduction should give the reader an indication of the size of this tome.

The text is supported by numerous clinical diagrams and possibly every variant of statistical graph. The reader is left feeling that no stone has been left unturned in the desire to cover every aspect of resuscitation medicine. As would be expected, subject areas covered include basic science, pathophysiology, therapies, post-resuscitation care and special circumstances.

Probably the most appealing part of the book is the final section, entitled “Special issues in resuscitation”. Although it comprises less than 7% of the book, it includes the oddities that make resuscitation medicine so fascinating. In this section, we are drawn into the realms of ethics, economics, medicolegal aspects, training issues (probably the most

disappointing chapter due to its brevity) and (most bizarrely) “near-death experiences”. This latter chapter could generate a book in its own right and is interesting reading. In particular, the drawings by a small child who had undergone a “near-death experience” are quite chilling.

This is not a book for light reading but will mainly be used as a reference text. It achieves what it sets out to do in impressive style and can truly claim to be a “comprehensive reference in advanced life support and resuscitation medicine”.

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Emergencies in clinical medicine

Edited by Piers Page, Greg Skinner. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2008, pp 456, £19.95. ISBN 13 978-0-19-920252-2.

WHY ANOTHER HANDBOOK?

“It’s 3am on your first night shift. Your bleep goes; the nurse informs you that she has a patient “that is not right, doctor” and needs to be seen straight away.”

“After the panic has settled, where do you turn?”

“You start by searching through the large library of books in your bag, selected to cover every emergency. Why waste time?”

We think we have found one book that could answer all your questions. Lots of “handbooks” promise this but why is this one so different from the rest? This book has been written by a young set of authors as “a text for junior doctors by junior doctors”.

Neatly split into two sections; it covers common symptoms first, followed by specialty-specific emergencies. It is very easy to find exactly what you are looking for in an emergency, which means that you are actually likely to be able to refer to it, when needed.

The symptoms covered occur commonly in a typical on-call, with no space wasted in describing rare symptoms and their management.

The red boxes are particularly useful in highlighting the immediate management required. They are logically presented, focussing on the ABC principles.

The specialty-specific section includes cardiology, respiratory, endocrine, gastroenterology, renal and urology, haematology, oncology and infectious diseases, neurology

and neurosurgery, orthopaedics, rheumatology and dermatology, surgery and clinical biochemistry. These are all specialties encountered in a typical foundation programme.

Although each topic is detailed it is not overpowering with the volume of information. Key topics are divided into one of four types: true life-threatening emergencies; patients who need to be assessed quickly; conditions that require careful assessment and the last covering management guidelines or advice on clinical dilemmas. These are represented with easy-to-follow symbols.

We had two small criticisms of the book. References were made in each emergency to calling a senior; however, we felt that perhaps this was not high enough on the priority list and were worried that the layout of the book might lead junior doctors to carry out larger amounts of the management plan before calling for senior help. Perhaps in the life-threatening emergency topics, reference should be made to calling a senior at the start.

Every topic has references to more detailed coverage elsewhere. Many of the references refer to other books or research papers, however, which you would be unlikely to refer to in an emergency. Perhaps more links to national guidelines or evidence-based medicine on the Internet would be more useful.

This book would be ideal for F1 or F2 doctors. It would also, however, serve as a useful aide-memoire for more senior specialty doctors who may be out of practice in dealing with emergencies and as a reference point for teaching juniors.

The text is didactic, as is generally the case with handbooks of this nature; however, in an emergency this is exactly what is required so there is little room for ambiguity. It is a smart, well-written and well-presented book. It is not a comprehensive reference book for any given speciality but this is not the point of the book. Having both recently finished the foundation programme this book comes highly recommended.

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CORRECTION

In April’s *Sophia* (*Emerg Med J* 2008;**25**:248), the first author should have been Simon Binks, not Banks.