BOOK REVIEWS

The Year Book of Emergency Medicine 1985

Edited by D. K. WAGNER

Blackwell Scientific Publications, Oxford. 1985. 392 pp. £41.00.

The aim of this book is to present a series of abstracts of interest and clinical use to the emergency physician in practice. In my view, it fulfils this function admirably. The editorial control is in the hands of a group of emergency physicians and has remained stable since the inception of the series 5 years ago, with some recent additions.

This is not to say that I am totally uncritical of the book. There is at least one example of twin reporting of similar articles on toxic shock syndrome (4·67 and 4·74), suggesting poor communication between authors. The index of subjects is not as useful as I would have hoped, although the author index is very thorough. This, however, means that one must read all the abstracts in order to avoid missing one of importance.

The change in external appearance of the volume, whilst aiming to improve its 'selling power', has made a noticeable step on my bookshelf, which I find a little irritating after only 5 years on the market. The change in the internal layout, however, is most welcome.

Yearbooks of this nature, with expert comment from physicians working in the speciality, are always 1-2 years 'in arrears'. Although this may be levelled as a criticism by some, I can see no alternative. An 'ON-LINE' service would place a much greater burden on its editors, detracting from their clinical work and, thereby, lessening the value of their comments.

I feel that this volume, and its future issues, should be on the shelf of every clinician who professes to keep abreast of the latest information and research in accident and emergency medicine. Its price puts it beyond the reach of the casual browser and I would expect that most juniors would end up reading their consultant's copy.

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Trauma—The First Hour

Edited by WILLIAM G. BAXT

Prentice/Hall International, London. 1985. £40.00.

This is the best book on the initial management of major trauma that I have read. All the authors are members of a 'rotocraft aeromedical emergency care service' and it is clear that they have extensive experience and lots of tips to pass on to the reader. However,

what is particularly attractive about the book is the solid anatomical, physiological and pathological basis upon which their recommendations are founded.

The book is divided into 12 chapters, starting with haemorrhagic shock, the airway and initial assessment, followed by sections dealing with trauma to specific body regions and ending with chapters on burns, unusual forms of trauma and a somewhat philosophical chapter about the concept of pre-hospital treatment and transport.

All the chapters are extremely well referenced and contain sound advice. I was, however, somewhat dismayed to find Dextran 40 being recommended rather than Dextran 70 for the management of hypovolaemic shock and that the authors confessed to using steroids in head injuries after conceding that the literature did not support them. However, these are exceptions to an otherwise extremely good text and probably reflect the book's North American origins. I was particularly impressed with an author's frequent reference to mechanisms of injury as being valuable adjuncts to assessment. The chapter on 'Unusual Forms of Trauma' has excellent sections on baro-trauma and radiation, again with lots of background scientific information to support pragmatic and useful tips for the management of the emergency patient.

I have no hesitation in recommending readers to purchase their own copy of this book despite its current price of £40. It is well bound, extremely well printed and should provide a reference source for all senior doctors working in accident and emergency departments for some years.

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Blood Component Therapy in Clinical Practice

By R. W. BEAL & J. B. ISBISTER

Transfusion of blood and blood products is a vital aspect of clinical practice which cuts across all medical specialities and yet is often badly taught, if at all, to undergraduate and postgraduate students. However, with AIDS holding the limelight and because of the risk of its transmission through transfusion of blood and its products, the whole area of blood component therapy has come under careful scrutiny. This is a timely reminder of the fact that clinical blood transfusion is not a totally innocuous practice and that clinicians should be very critical in the usage of blood or blood products.

This book, by Drs R. W. Beal and J. B. Isbister, comes at an opportune time when there is an important need for a re-appraisal of current practices. The monograph, as the authors point out, is not meant as a transfusion or reference text book, but is aimed at clinicians who are involved in the regular use of blood and its components. To this end, it serves its purpose very well. Accordingly, emphasis is laid on the clinical aspects of transfusion therapy rather than the laboratory aspects which are normally amply covered in many standard serology text books. Nonetheless, the authors have included a working knowledge of basic immunohaematology and an adequate discussion of the technical aspects of blood storage and the fractionation procedures involved in the