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
production of its various components. In addition, there are useful sections on the basic physiology of oxygen transport, plasma volume expanders and haemostasis, which provide the basis for rational use of blood products. The chapters on platelet and granulocyte transfusions are particularly welcome as they give a balanced view of the potential benefits to be derived from their use. Inherited coagulation disorders and their management are also dealt with, and a chapter on apheresis outlines its potential usefulness in many clinical conditions. The hazards of blood transfusion are also highlighted: in particular, the risk of transmission of hepatitis and AIDS, and measures taken by the Transfusion Service to minimise such risks are also discussed. The use of autologous blood transfusion is also mentioned and it is hoped that this practice will be more widely adopted. It is also not such a far-fetched idea that effective artificial blood substitutes may soon become available and, with the advances in molecular biology that genetically-engineered Factor VIII and other coagulation factors, may soon replace the plasma-derived products. No doubt, in the fast-moving field of retroviruses and AIDS, more will also have to be appended.

It is a lucidly written book which is easy to read. It should prove popular with clinicians who are not only involved in the emergency resuscitation of patients, but also with those involved in the management of patients requiring long-term blood component replacement therapy. Postgraduate students and trainees in haematology should also find the content useful for examination purposes and, for those requiring further information, the list of references at the end of each chapter will prove quite valuable.

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