Cardiac Arrest—What Do You Do?
By J. GARDINER
Stanley Thornes Limited, Cheltenham. 1986. £3.25.

This little book sets out to describe the basic principles of resuscitation for nurses, medical students and ambulancemen. The book begins with a section on very basic anatomy and physiology, more suited to the ambulanceman than the medical student, but none the worse for that. There is an excellent chapter on basic life support, which would be better called by this now accepted name than the term used: primary resuscitation. There is sensible practical advice on the use of suction apparatus, the self-inflation bag and mask, and the use of the defibrillator. The early use of the defibrillator is not stressed sufficiently.

The drugs commonly used in cardiac arrest are described briefly and sensibly, although it is a pity that there is rather too much implied support for the user of calcium chloride, which is now thought to be detrimental in cases of myocardial ischaemia. Similarly, it is not emphasized that, in most cases of sudden unexpected arrest, sodium bicarbonate administration should be withheld for 15–20 min. The irritant effects of both calcium and bicarbonate are not sufficiently stressed. Endobronchial installation of certain drugs is mentioned and it would be helpful if a definite list could be included indicating those drugs, which are suitable for this route and those which are not.

There are useful practical appendices on the management of choking, the recovery position, endotracheal intubation, the application of resuscitation in children and the interpretation of common life-threatening ECG traces.

The illustrations, particularly the line diagrams, are quite excellent and will be of great value to the reader.

It is a pity, however, that action algorithms along the lines of those produced by the Resuscitation Council (UK) were not included, to tie all the information and guidance together.

All in all, this book fills the role for which it is designed quite admirably. It is very good value for money.

P. J. BASKETT
Consultant Anaesthetist,
Frenchay Hospital,
Bristol, England

This is the second book by Mr Gardiner and, like his first publication The ECG—what does it tell? it is aimed, in particular, at ambulance personnel, nurses and junior medical staff.

The Introduction includes a simple description of the anatomy of the neck and chest, some causes of cardiac arrest and diagnosis.

Treatment is divided into: ‘Primary Resuscitation,’ which consists of the ABC of Resuscitation, clearly described, and a brief history of ECC is also included; ‘Secondary Measures,’ which includes aspiration equipment (instruction on how to use it is not given), selection and use of O-P airways, mention of the ‘Resusci-Aide’ and ‘Brook