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 use 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.

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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'

airway, and use of bag/mask resuscitators such as AMBU and LAERDAL; and 'Tertiary Measures,' being endotracheal intubation, ECG monitoring and defibrillation, drugs and IV infusion (the technique of setting up an infusion is not given and the description of sodium bicarbonate dosage may leave some readers in the dark).

There is a brief discussion of aftercare and future developments in CPR.

Appendices include the 'Treatment of Choking' by back blows and Heimlich technique, the 'Recovery Position,' 'Endotracheal Intubation'—described in greater detail with clear photographs and diagrams, 'Hypothermia,' 'Paediatric Resuscitation,' including the ABC of Resuscitation, Defibrillation and Drugs, and 'ECG Recognition' of several rhythms (the point about relating the ECG monitor to the patient is very valid).

At £3.25 this book is reasonably priced. Ambulance personnel involved in advanced training (as well as nurses and junior doctors) will find this book of interest, and should find the sections on endotracheal intubation, drugs and ECG recognition particularly helpful, the book being a useful addition to their bookshelf.

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A Colour Atlas of Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation Techniques

By C. PAGE, K. MILLS & R. MORTON

Wolfe Medical Publications Limited, London. 1986. £9.95.

There is something immediately attractive and striking about bold colour plates and colour atlases always enjoy a wide popularity. Regrettably, *Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation Techniques* comes far short of the high standards normally entertained by Wolfe Medical Publications. To start with, the scope of the book is confusing—the care of patients with in-dwelling tracheal tubes is no more a CPR technique than the control of bleeding from a simple scalp wound or helicopter transportation of the injured: all have very pretty and entertaining photographs but little relevance to the topic. The authors have no especial standing as experts in this field and, hence, their approach is outdated, illogical and unclear. It is at variance with current nationally and internationally agreed guidelines. Several of the illustrations are of poor technical quality or obviously faked. What is most objectionable about the book is that it purports to be all things to all men, yet the core material is treated with nothing like the right level of thoroughness. Bronchoscopy, tracheostomy, drainage of a haemothorax and open-chest cardiac compression are treated under *basic* life support (!) in the same glib manner as the treatment of croup in children and the use of a floatation bag in aquatic rescue.

CPR techniques can only be learned by practical supervision under the watchful eye of a skilled tutor: the disclaimer 'that certain advanced procedures shown in this atlas should only be undertaken by people trained in the techniques' would appear to make the justification for this publication a nonsense. The book falls far wide of the authors' aim 'to simplify the understanding of and improve the performance of cardiopulmonary resuscitation techniques.' Because this is a picture book and realistically priced, I am