Emergency Medicine, The Principles of Practice
Edited by GORDIAN W. O. FULDE.

Emergency Medicine, The Principles of Practice is edited by Mr Fulde, an accident and emergency consultant in Sydney, Australia, and who holds the FRCS (A&E) Ed diploma.

It is a very comprehensive book, which is geared to this examination. Every candidate for this examination should read it, quite apart from every middle grade, and consultant, accident and emergency doctor.

There are some, but not major, deficiencies in the book, caused partly by it coming from an Australian background, with an Australian view of advanced cardiopulmonary life support, and advanced trauma life support, and also by virtue of the fact that it is multi-author.

The chapter on ‘Cardiopulmonary resuscitation—philosophy and objectives’ should probably come after the next but one chapter ‘Resuscitation prodecures’. The description of arrythmias is good, but the sequences for ventricular fibrillation, atrial aystole and electromechanical dissociation are not precisely those practised in the UK. It is a pity that the discussion on electromechanical dissociation does not lead on to trauma, which could probably be covered more fully, and be in line with the standardized teaching of the American College of Surgeons.

The description of shock states emphasizes the VIP system—ventilation, infusion pump. Whilst this is a worthwhile and appropriate approach, it differs from the primary survey, resuscitation, and secondary survey system that is taught on ATLS courses, such as that held at the Royal College of Surgeons of England in November 1988. The VIP approach is useful as a summary during the resuscitation phase after the primary survey. The classification of the causes of shock is a little contradictory, with trauma and anaphylaxis being classified under endogenous hypovolaemic shock. Again, the ATLS teaching of the four classes of haemorrhage would really be more useful for hypovolaemic shock.

In addition, some chapters such as those on ‘Management of suspected myocardial infarction’, and ‘The role of the anaesthetist’, are far too short. There is insufficient emphasis on the vital importance of the appreciation of unstable angina and the diagnosis of subarachnoid haemorrhage, and in the chapter on ‘Wound management’ too little emphasis on the management of pretibial lacerations. The classification of burns is American, and the calculation of fluid requirements using the Parkland formula is not familiar to most accident doctors in the UK.

However, many chapters, in this book are excellent and very comprehensive, for instance ‘Organ imaging in emergencies and in seriously ill patients’, ‘Dental pain’, ‘Acquired immunodeficiency patients’ and the ‘Emergency presentations of alcohol and drugs’. The book has a good index.

Perhaps the most humorous sentence was in the chapter on ‘Emergencies in children’ when under the heading ‘Convulsions’ it states that ‘if intravenous access is not rapidly possible, inject 0.5 mg/kg of diazepam into the rectum’ and follows this with the cautionary advice—‘first removing the needle from the syringe’. Perhaps there has been some unfortunate accident ‘down under’.

This book is much more comprehensive than the shorter texts which have recently
appeared, without being so long that it cannot easily be read from cover to cover. As such, it takes up a well-defined slot, and I recommend it to every doctor interested in accident and emergency work, and to every accident and emergency department, where it should be freely available to the senior house officer carda.

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Problems in Paediatric Emergency Medicine
Edited by ROBERT C. LUTEN

This book concentrates on the emergency management of the paediatric patient, focusing mainly on trauma and medical emergencies. The book is written by US authors and therefore when reading it one has to adjust the social background and the clinical management so that it applies to current practice in Britain today. The book is divided into three sections, the first a section on the general management of paediatric patients, a second trauma section and a third medical section.

The general section has a chapter on the medicolegal aspects of managing paediatric patients, including consent, which is useful reading for anybody dealing with the paediatric patient. The chapter on child abuse is basically a social description and does not contain any information which is not better described elsewhere. There is a critical chapter on the use of investigations, such as X-rays, and the laboratory, which provides some sensible guidelines for the use of these facilities.

The second section on trauma management concentrates on the child with multiple injuries, the child with cervical spine injuries, some problems in fracture management and some problems in minor trauma care.

Each chapter emphasizes the differences in the paediatric patient as compared with the adult patient and this provides some guidance in child management, for example to the necessity of X-raying cervical spine in a child.

The section on fractures describes the anatomy and physiology of children’s bones, with a useful section on epiphysis and the different types of fracture that children may sustain. They concentrate particularly on fractures that are special to children, with a description of how they affect the child’s growth and development, as well as to describing primary care.

The third section describes medical problems in the management of vomiting, diarrhoea and dehydration, seizures, respiratory distress and intoxications. I found the chapter on the management of poisoning extremely useful, in that it describes the evaluation of paediatric overdose patients and gives a critical guide to the different methods of treatment. The problems associated with gastric lavage, emesis and the giving of activated charcoal are well described.

This book as a whole I feel would be helpful to somebody who already has a basic knowledge of paediatrics and emergency medicine, who wishes to appraise further