

BOOK REVIEWS

Trauma

By KENNETH L. MATTOX *et al.*

Appleton & Lange, Connecticut, USA, 1988. 930pp. £133.75.

This book sets out to cover the whole subject of trauma comprehensively in one volume by means of a large number of individual contributions, the authors of whom are some of the best known names in trauma management. The text includes the history of trauma management from ancient times through to the modern concept of trauma centres, and deals with the management of specific injuries throughout treatment.

Unfortunately the historical section contains several errors, one of which is an incorrect designation of Sir John Pringle as a Surgeon General of the English Army in the 18th century when in fact he was the Physician General concerned more with medicine than surgery.

Unfortunately out of some 900 pages only four are devoted to pre-hospital care of the injured and what there is is purely a didactic message without any scientific logic. It ends with an extraordinary comment on the recommendations by the American College of Surgeons to enable emergency medical technicians to identify patients upon whom they should not attempt resuscitation. At first glance the reader may feel to have a list of such criteria would be very valuable but when we then find that these criteria include post-mortem lividity, rigor mortis, decapitation, decomposition, and hemicorporectomy, and a trauma score of 1, one appreciates just how incredibly didactic instructions must be within the USA. Presumably this is the result of the fact that there is a lawyer looking over your shoulder.

In general the Editors have made this very readable and there seems to be a policy of using simple line diagrams throughout which prove very useful. The thoroughness with which subject is dealt with depends upon the author concerned and regrettably many forms of treatment commonly accepted in Europe are not mentioned.

The most valuable part of this book is a special section on unusual topics not usually covered in the common trauma text books. These include the problems of trauma in the young, the old, injury due to environmental problems, animal bites, stings, and radiation. There is a section on the management of bites from venomous spiders, which can make spine chilling reading, in what is undoubtedly the best chapter in the book which is a very comprehensive review of minor wounds and such injuries. Practical problems associated with violence, especially of the domestic and child abuse nature, which includes sexual problems, are covered in a useful chapter. The reflect anal dilation test which has been given great publicity recently is not mentioned.

Unusual in most trauma text books is a chapter covering military aspects of trauma written for the civilian surgeon who may have to prepare himself to deal with war injuries. This chapter comes from the pen of Professor Ben Eiseman and contains no nonsense sentences which should leave the reader in no doubt as to the reasons why military surgery may, on occasion, appear to conflict with normal civil practice.

This book is probably the best of the recently produced multi-author tomes on trauma from the USA. It is easy to read and perhaps its major fault is that some detail has had to be sacrificed in order to achieve the comprehensive nature of the contents. The traumatologist will find that there is something to learn from nearly all its chapters except for the section on pre-hospital care which regrettably is very disappointing.

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1988 Yearbook of Emergency Medicine

Edited by DAVID K. WAGNER

Yearbook Medical Publishers Inc., Chicago, 1988. 334pp. £35.50.

The Yearbook of Emergency Medicine consists of 325 titled abstracts, each with its original journal reference, taken from 79 journals, ranging from the *Journal of Trauma* to *Acta Paediatrica Scandinavica*. Each abstract is immediately followed by a guest editorial comment, many of equal proportion and import to the accompanying abstract. The material is collected into sections, for example Acute Systems Pathophysiology, Trauma Emergencies etc. and includes a broad range of informative articles of relevance to the specialty of accident and emergency medicine.

A working knowledge of accident and emergency medicine is a definite benefit in getting the most from this work. Of its very nature, it is not a teaching text book. However, the reader with some background knowledge will find this book complementary, providing up-to-date information on previous work, some new tricks and ideas and practical information on rarer topics. A large percentage of the entries are comprehensive in the provision of data and conclusions. A number, though small, are uninformative and of doubtful relevance. I found the editorial comments always at least as useful and on many occasions, more so, than the relevant abstract; they were far more than simply textual thumbs-up or -down comments. Many of them included references to other relevant works. If an article was poor, the editorial comment would usefully prevent the reader from a time-wasting search for the original with a comprehensive criticism. This is uncommon, as most of the abstracts were well structured, relevant, informative and stimulating and were followed by solid well-informed editorial comment.

I think this book is a good way of boning up of many aspects of state-of-the-art emergency medicine, and is a useful addition to the accident and emergency specialists' collection.

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