

Manual of Emergency Medicine – 2nd Edition

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A Little, Brown, Medical Title: Distributed in Europe by Churchill Livingstone
1990. 496 pp. £9.95.

This is an extremely comprehensive pocket-sized emergency textbook. Its spiral binding and small print allows the book to cover this vast subject in a detail unparalleled by other textbooks of a similar size.

The intent of the authors was to make a text which was practical and could be used as for reference. To this end they divided the book into five sections, titled Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation, Diagnosis by Chief Complaint, Initial Management of the Multiply Traumatized Patient, Trauma and finally Specific Problems in Emergency Medicine and Trauma.

The second section is divided into 34 chapters which are set out in a uniform pattern consisting of Differential Diagnosis, History, Physical Examination, Emergency Diagnostic Tests, Clinical Reminders and then finishes with details of Specific Disorders presenting with the particular Complaint. This is a very useful way of laying the book out and certainly enables the reader to rapidly acquire the appropriate information. It does entail a lot of cross-referencing but as this book will probably be used for reference purposes, this is no major disadvantage.

The problems with the book are minor, firstly it is an American textbook and therefore has terms and units, which are occasionally inappropriate for UK practising physicians. Secondly, the protocol management of particular problems, for instance, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, varies from the UK guidelines. This is most noticeable when they describe the management of electromechanical dissociation. Their description of the management of trauma follows very much the Advanced Trauma Life Support guidelines, but it is written in a less comprehensible fashion. The traditional A&E management of the trauma patient is not emphasized clearly enough in this book. Medical aspects are covered in great detail and there is only the occasional problem. For example, concordance is not mentioned in the table distinguishing SVT from VT. Occasional inaccurate statements of a traditional nature occur in the text, for example, they still describe the diagnosis of carbon monoxide exposure being made on the characteristic cherry red colouration of the skin and mucus membrane.

In summary, this small handbook represents a very detailed account of emergency medicine. Its pocket size will enable the A&E staff to carry and use it as a reference text. I would certainly recommend it as only minor corrections are required depending very much on particular departmental policy and the slight variations between UK and American practice in medicine.

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