BOOK REVIEWS


Intensive Care is an ever expanding discipline that cares for the seriously ill of virtually all medical and surgical specialties. As such, it is difficult for a single volume of 299 pages to cover in any depth the knowledge and techniques required for the practice of Intensive Care. This small volume contains the vast majority of the basic concepts required for the safe practice of the care of the seriously ill. A surprisingly large amount is included by the careful and precise use of English. The information is mostly up-to-date, with a small, but useful, list of references for each chapter.

Because of limited space some items may not be given the weight that they deserve. Hypovolaemic shock has less that one page devoted to it, and there is no specific chapter for trauma. At a time when society talks of the new epidemic of trauma this may be an oversight. This is particularly true for Army surgeons and anaesthetists, for whom trauma teaching and research is increasing.

With all text books, knowledge and practice has advanced by the time the protracted writing and publishing process results in their eventual delivery to the public. The chapter on cardiopulmonary cerebral resuscitation was immediately devalued by the publishing of the Resuscitation Council’s new guidelines in 1989. The drug regimes for asystole, ventricular fibrillation and electromechanical dissociation have all been revised, as has the use of defibrillation in the apparent isoelectric electrocardiogram. It is now recommended in case ventricular fibrillation is present, but disguised.

In the chapter on myocardial infarction, streptokinase or other thrombolytic drugs are not mentioned. Again, a problem of the pen-to-print delay.

This book would be a useful purchase by any doctor with an interest in Intensive Care. It is most suited to the junior doctor particularly in anaesthesia, medicine and surgery, but may function as an aide memoire to the more experienced.

M C THOMPSON


This slim volume, like many WHO publications, has been long incubating. With over 100 technical advisors this is hardly surprising. The aim of providing internationally agreed definitions in line with the rules established for the International nomenclature of diseases (IND) was an immense undertaking. Professor M Stephehd played a major editorial role in this undertaking.

The lexicon is designed for use in conjunction with Chapter V (Mental disorders) of the ninth revision of the International classification of diseases (ICD-9) and the terms defined will be used, as far as possible, in the tenth revision of the ICD (ICD-10). Definitions of over 300 terms that appear in Chapter V of ICD-9 are provided, and many of these duplicate those available in the glossary. The volume (no indication is given of what Volume 2 will contain) is in three parts providing definitions for:

(i) diagnostic terms (Part I)
(ii) symptoms and signs (Part II)
(iii) conceptual terms (Part III)

The alphabetical arrangement makes for ease of use and the code number for the ICD-9 rubric in which the term appears is given in brackets after each entry. Parts II and III are extremely brief and could readily have been consolidated with Part I.

A useful feature is inclusion of the note ‘deprecated’ after terms that should no longer be used, e.g. schizophrenia, latent (ICD 295.5).

The lexicon is a step towards the development of an international nomenclature of mental disorders and should facilitate international communication. Psychiatrists in training will find the volume helpful in understanding the correct use of various terms. Non-psychiatrists, attempting to understand psychiatric reports, might find enlightenment in the lexicon, and could also be helpful for secretaries in Psychiatric Departments.

J S McPherson


This handbook is directed to “allied health professionals”, which I take to mean everyone other than doctors who are involved in the care of children with head injuries. The style is “chatty”, often with disregard for correct syntax which although at first off-putting, was in the end a refreshing approach and a definite improvement on American texts which can be as heavy as “plum pudding”.

There is a brief description of normal anatomy and physiology, followed by a simple explanation of the pathophysiology of brain injury which, although lacking in great detail, was presented in a concise and easy to understand summary.

The longest chapter deals with the clinical spectrum. The author must have had experience of some “heavy handed” obstetricians, because throughout the book there are graphic descriptions of the terrible head injuries occurring during childbirth. One gets the impression that these are much more common than is the experience in this country. There is a useful review
of the debate about whether the children need to be admitted to hospital after a head injury, along with the value of various investigations. The approach seems to be based on common sense along with a great deal of experience. For all professionals, the importance of good observation is emphasised. Too often trained observers document quite accurately the deterioration of a child without understanding the significance of their observations.

This book is aimed at non-doctors involved with injured children and gives a good, easy to read review of the subject. Medical students and junior doctors would also find it a useful introduction to an important topic.

A J Lyon


Sir Ian Fraser is known to all within the Corps and this book which is published by the Memoir Club of the British Medical Journal contains the reminiscences of his life as a surgeon over the past 60 years.

Quite a lot of the book is taken up with his wartime experiences which make fascinating reading. I am sure that his widespread involvement in the different theatres of war gave him the stimulus for his globe-trotting activities afterwards.

The contents of the book are sheer vintage Fraser. He is a born raconteur and his style is reflected in the written word. Most of the chapters are joined together in historical sequence, but each can stand on its own. There is something to delight every reader in this book, many of the stories are hilariously funny, many of great historic interest and of course many have direct relevance to the RAMC.

Sir Ian's enthusiasm, energy and wit are legendary and it is a pleasure that he has shared some of these stories with us.

It is a pity about the price which means that mostly the book will be placed in libraries; a paperback version would have obtained a far wider audience because it is fascinating reading and I can thoroughly recommend it.

M Owen-Smith

**Epidemiology of Work - related Disease and Accidents.**


I am not all convinced that reviewing WHO Reports is a worthwhile exercise. Those who are interested will seek them out, otherwise there is little to be gained by reading what often exhibits the worst banalities of consensus effort. Like so many of its kind the recommendations of this one border on the laudable aims of the abolition of original sin such as "Efforts should be made to assess the magnitude of the problem of work related diseases and accidents in each country." It is difficult to expect otherwise when members are drawn from 14 countries as diverse as Algeria, Sudan, Singapore, Bulgaria, USSR, USA and Japan, (no UK member).

The report is divided into a general introduction followed by consideration of three specific systems namely respiratory disease, cardiovascular disease and musculoskeletal disorders. The final section discusses pitfalls and the application of epidemiology in prevention of ill health.

I would not recommend this report for general reading but it does contain a useful fund of concise and interesting details of worldwide occupational health problems which would be helpful to those either undertaking a study of, or presentation on one of the work areas reported.

J R Brown


This hard-back book of some 180 pages is well produced and is copiously illustrated, but unfortunately it did not fulfil the high expectations that my first impressions had led me to believe it would.

Only the names of the two authors are known, as nowhere in the foreword to this book are they identified as dentists or doctors, general practitioners, or specialists, or is their experience in this clinical field documented.

The book reviewed was the American edition prepared by Monica Strong, Associate Professor of Restorative Dentistry at the Washington University School of Dental Medicine, St Louis, Missouri.

The authors cover a comprehensive range of potential life threatening emergencies that might occur in a dental clinic. However, it is unfortunate that some of the regimes suggested conflict with current UK advice, and in at least two sections the advice given is contradicted in later sections.

The book is likely to be confusing for the average British reader as the drugs are listed by their American names. The section at the back of the book that lists the drugs does give the UK name for most, but not all, of the drugs noted in the text; a few of the drugs suggested for use are not listed at all. Some of the series of illustrations showing resuscitation techniques are also confusing with the patient rapidly changing position from chair to floor, and back again.

A good, handy-sized, well illustrated book which gives clear and unambiguous regimes for the treatment of life-threatening emergencies in dental practice would be a useful addition to any dental clinic. It is unfortunate that this book does not fulfil its expectations, and is not a book that can be recommended.

M J Newell

The author of this book is Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at the St. Louis School of Medicine in Missouri, USA as well as Director of the Department of Psychology and Neurology and of the Psychosomatic Research Laboratories of Deaconess Hospital, St. Louis.

This book attempts to harness recent advances in the neurosciences in order to present a scientific explanation for the beneficial use of acupuncture in the treatment of pain. The word recent has to be set in its proper context since the book was published in 1982 and seven years is an awful long time in neurophysiology and neuropharmacology!

The book starts by presenting an analysis of the research done in the field of psychological versus physiological mechanisms in acupuncture. The author concludes that there is more than enough evidence to support a scientific basis for acupuncture. There is no doubt that many of the classical Chinese acupuncture meridian points are purely placebo points but these placebo effects serve to reinforce a genuine physiological mode of action.

The author then looks at pain mechanisms and although the material is presented in a very clear and readable manner I found this section rather superficial and somewhat dated.

There then follows a review of the possible methods of action of acupuncture in pain. It is here that the book's age shows; e.g. there is nothing at all about Bowsher's view of the possible central role of the serotonergic descending system and the interaction of the cells of Waldayer in suprasegmental acupuncture. However the book does contain a very interesting diagram originating from Peking which provides a schematic representation of the brain hormone system that modulates pain mechanisms in the CNS.

The author then presents a selection of 75 motor points of use in the treatment of pain and presents the physiological justification for their use; this section is lavishly illustrated and very informative. He then proceeds to discuss selection of these points in the context of neurotome distribution. Acupuncture point selection is therefore presented in a very rational and scientific manner far removed from the mumbo-jumbo approach of classical Chinese acupuncture. This approach is also used by the author when he considers cutaneous-visceral and visco-cutaneous reflexes, auricular acupuncture and trigger points. He concludes this section by summarising his clinical approach to the individual patient based upon purely physiological considerations. He dismisses the classical Chinese approach, including pulse diagnosis and balancing of yang and yin as empirical mythology, a sentiment with which I wholeheartedly concur!

There then follows a rather unnecessary presentation of classical formulas for tackling various medical conditions with acupuncture, a description of proper needle techniques, a discussion of the medico-legal aspects of acupuncture in the USA, a list of references and finally a summary of the philosophy and practice of classical Chinese acupuncture.

As a clinician who has been practising acupuncture for several years and who has long ago abandoned the classical Chinese approach, I found this book very interesting and easy to read. As stated above, some of the research material is a bit dated but of value nevertheless. I was most impressed by the author's physiological use of acupuncture in the clinical setting.

I would recommend this book to all medical acupuncturists as it provides a sound physiological basis to the 'art'; I do this with the proviso that they update their knowledge in the light of more recent work in the field.

C A GAUDET


This book, of pocketable size and commendable brevity, is directed at those who have to deal with ophthalmic problems in a non-specialist context. Necessarily dogmatic in format, it manages to cover a wide range of problems and to give useful practical advice to the reader, using a succinct annotated format. One inevitably has one or two reservations about a book written by an American ophthalmologist five years ago; since naturally the subject has changed a great deal since then, and in addition the management of many disorders reflects American rather than English practice; for example laser trabeculoplasty in glaucoma. There exists an English alternative to this text which is perhaps a little more up to date, the ABC of Eyes by Elkington and Khaw. Notwithstanding these criticisms, this book does contain useful and practical advice for the GP and casualty officer.

P M BROWN


This book, published in easy-to-read print by the WHO, deals with the problem of maternal deaths throughout the world. The enormous scale of maternal mortality worldwide is brought home, in contrast to the clinical dissection of the comparatively few cases in England and Wales in the Reports on Confidential Enquiries into Maternal Deaths.

Starting with the problems of gaining accurate statistics in most countries, the book proceeds to try and...
determine the size of the problem and estimates that at most only 1% of maternal deaths occur in the developed world.

It then presents an interesting insight into the role of women in society in the countries with high maternal mortality, and discusses how their low status adversely affects them. This is followed by a review of the different causes of maternal deaths, and how they could be prevented.

The last chapters look at ways of preventing maternal deaths, many of which relate to changing the status of women in their societies. Cost estimates are also briefly presented.

I am not sure for whom this book was written, as the style varies rapidly from science to anecdote, and is very much an overview. It should be available for reference, and would be useful reading for health care planners, but will not be of much value for doctors and nurses in the developed world.

I J Page


This book would be more appropriately titled a Colour Atlas of AIDS in Africa. Virtually all of the 404 colour illustrations are of African origin, not surprising perhaps, as all five authors work in Lusaka, Zambia. Non-African tropical regions receive scant attention, a fact which could give a misleading impression that the African pattern of disease is common to the whole of the tropical band.

The quality of the illustrations is exceptionally high, fully justifying the cost, which at £35.00 for 126 pages, might otherwise seem excessive. Unfortunately the captioning of certain illustrations does not match their quality. One of the earliest photographs shows hypersensitivity skin testing, but nowhere is the significance of the results explained. Target-like lesions of the upper limbs are described as being cystic acne. A tongue is described as black and hairy when the illustration shows no black areas. AAKS is used in captioning slides twelve and ten pages prior to the text explaining that this is an abbreviation for atypical African Kaposi's sarcoma.

The text is clear, concise and complements the photographs.

Overall this is a useful atlas with some excellent clinical photographs marred by simple errors which hopefully will be corrected in a second edition.

K Freeman

Aberdeen Medico-Chirurgical Society
A Bicentennial History 1789-1989

This book is no tedious rehash of the Society's Minute Books but covers a vastly wider field. The Editor has laid hands on some 25 separate contributors who have given us a variety of papers ranging from Sir James McGrigor to The Role of Woman in the Society.

Our Corps readers will be interested in the paper by the late Colonel A G D Whyte on the McGrigor Manuscripts in the Society's care. They will also be interested in the account of the 15th Scottish General Hospital.

The names of eminent Aberdeen doctors brought back my student days - can they really be 60 years ago - and I read the whole book with the greatest of interest.

The Editor is to be congratulated. It is a book which can be recommended to all Aberdeen graduates.

A MacLennan