ABSTRACTS OF PUBLICATIONS

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Abstract: The British Army has been concerned for several years about the high rate of injuries incurred in training. A report in 1989 recommended that running (including mandatory fitness testing) should be carried out in training shoes.

This study examined the incidence and causes of lower limb injury amongst recruits, to assess whether there has been any improvement in injury rates since the recommendations from the 1989 report were incorporated into regimes.

The survey covered 1059 cases of LLI in 7256 recruits, at Army Training Regiments over a one year period. The factors involved and the type of injuries incurred were examined and are discussed. Boots Combat High (the standard temperate climate Army boot) were being worn at the onset of symptoms of overuse lower limb injuries in 57.6% of cases.

This study recommended that the physical aspects of recruit training should be reassessed. The UK approach to the problem which includes more direct involvement of occupational physicians in the recruitment and training organisations is discussed.

BOOK REVIEWS


Neurological emergencies cause concern. They are a worry to patients and medical students and doctors because they can be difficult to diagnose and treat, and incorrect initial management can leave permanent disastrous sequelae. They are also common and all concerned with the delivery of acute medical care will have to manage such emergencies.

This book covers in 13 chapters subjects properly considered neurological emergencies, which are often managed, initially at least, by non-neurologists, be they physicians or surgeons.

 Appropriately, those chapters on Head Injury, Raised Intracranial Pressure, Acute Spinal Cord Compression and Management of Subarachnoid Haemorrhage are written by neurosurgeons, and chapters on Delirium and Acute Behaviour Disturbances are written by psychiatrists. Two chapters (Ischaemic stroke and Acute Visual Failure) have American authors and transatlantic views are always interesting to compare with United Kingdom opinion, since concordance is seldom total. For example the unqualified recommendation for intravenous heparin to patients with small or moderate ischaemic stroke would not find favour with many British neurologists.

The book has a usefully clinical approach and for those with insufficient time or inclination to digest the whole text, a summary box with the 'take home messages' is provided at the end of each chapter. Inevitably some of the views expressed are open to criticism. However, this book represents a readable amalgam of much wisdom and I strongly recommend it to students and physicians who manage acutely sick patients.

 JRC BOWEN


This volume has long been awaited. It was the vision of the late Major General Robert Scott (1929-1991) and, most appropriately, is dedicated to his memory. It is the most comprehensive review of the science underpinning trauma yet to be published. Although its editors and authors are, for the main, a cross section of national and international civilian experts, the work has not lost its intended focus and includes a comprehensive review of the trauma of war and terrorism. This reviewer particularly welcomes the sections on ballistic and blast injuries. These are two areas of concern where the Corps has particular interest. The expertise and the sections blow away the cobwebs of confusion and controversy, presenting a consensus view of these topics underwritten by sound research and operational experience. It is very pleasing to see the names of so many current Service surgeons and scientists among the authors.

The sections and chapters follow a logical sequence from penetrating, through blunt and blast injury, with a welcome chapter on chemical injuries. However, this chapter is very limited in its extent, dealing only with mustard gas burns and omitting any mention of the management of penetrating wounds contaminated with chemical warfare agents - an area widely researched by Ministry of Defence scientists and surgeons in the late 1980s. This may be in part due to work's very prolonged gestation period, a point which will be obvious where readers note the age of the many of the references. The inclusion of Professor Yates's excellent paper on assessing severity of injury in the chemical injuries section also jars.

The second part of the book is devoted to the pathophysiology of injury and is excellent if again a little out of date. Chapters on the acute inflammatory response give a detailed review of this difficult topic which is of considerable relevance to military medical officers concerned with Systemic Inflammatory Response Syndrome (SIRS) and Multiple Organ Dysfunction Syndrome (MOSD) with considerable relevance to military medical officers concerned with Systemic Inflammatory Response Syndrome (SIRS) and Multiple Organ Dysfunction Syndrome (MOSD).
Syndrome (MODS) following battlefield injury.

Overall, this is an excellent and welcome work and should be available in every major medical unit library. It is perhaps too expensive for individual purchase. The delays in getting the book from drawing board to bookshelf means that an early second edition is likely and is necessary.

JM Ryan


This 229 page text deals with non-invasive cardiovascular monitoring in 15 well constructed and illustrated chapters. Each chapter is concluded by an extensive list of important references.

In the excellent introduction by the author, the merits of the non-invasive approach to monitoring are discussed. As technology advances there is an increasing tendency by many clinicians to leap in to invasive techniques with what often seems like an unquenchable desire to insert as many tubes and wires as possible. This introduction and the rest of the text logically attempt to redress the balance.

Many of the chapters have an historical introduction before developing the theoretical and practical aspects of monitoring. Much of the book is devoted to the principal non-invasive techniques of both electrocardiography and blood pressure monitoring.

There is also a chapter on doppler ultrasound monitoring which goes into some detail on the theory and physics of this technique - perhaps in a little too much detail. The application of ultrasound is discussed, bringing the reader back to clinical medicine.

The book is written by a Consultant Anaesthetist and in his preface he suggests that he has an aesthetists and staff working in acute and critical areas in hospital in mind. This includes nursing staff. This probably explains the brevity of some chapters, such as home blood pressure monitoring. It seems to be simplified to the extent that one wonders why it was included and is in stark contrast to the complexities of other chapters such as doppler ultrasound.

Even with these comments I think the book achieves its aim in reviewing this subject for acute and critical care staff and for anaesthetists, but has probably little to offer staff outside these fields.

An interesting read, but not a 'must' for my own library.

N Ineson


Michael O'Donnell has spent much of his career collecting medical anecdotes and ridiculing the self-important. Produced in dictionary format, this is the distillation of years of medical columns and could be described as a "best of" O'Donnell. Administrators come off worst but no one is safe. Having smiled wryly at the clichés, malapropisms and impenetrable language used by bureaucrats, I now find myself writing my own letters rather more carefully...

It's the sort of book that keeps you longer than necessary in lavatories and makes the morning collection of brown envelopes almost bearable. If you didn't get it in your Christmas stocking and you haven't a birthday coming up, go out and buy it.

JB Salmon


The poem 'In Flanders Fields' will be familiar to all who attend the annual Remembrance Services but few will know that its author was a senior Canadian Medical Officer who died towards the end of World War 1. Dianne Graves has made available to the public a fascinating account of the life of John McCrae and how he came to write a poem that has remained forever in the thoughts of so many of the English speaking nations.

In the Preface the author states that this is not a biography of John McCrae but the story of John McCrae and his world. She has certainly done a very good job of telling this story. Although early chapters, which tell how the McCrae family came to emigrate to Canada and start their new life, tend to make rather hard reading, the chapters covering McCrae's eventual medical training and service with the artillery in the South African War are compelling. In the inter war years McCrae had earned great respect in the medical circles of Montreal but still regarded himself as a militia artillery officer and not a medical officer and it was as the former that he went off to the Great War. It was only in the latter stages of the war that he became a full-time medical officer. The author has opened many of the chapters with a general resume of events in the lead up to the war and also the war years themselves. Some readers may feel that this is unnecessary.

John McCrae died of pneumonia and meningitis in the early hours of 28th January 1918, on the eve of becoming Consultant Physician to the British Armies in the Field. The book continues for another chapter, the Epilogue summing up the end of the war and then explaining how the innovation of the poppy took place and how John McCrae is remembered in his adopted country of Canada.

Each chapter contains extensive end notes and there is a large bibliography at the end of the book. Despite reservations concerning the early chapters, this book is recommended to both the military historian and the general reader and Dianne Graves is to be congratulated for turning a casual visit to Essex Farm dressing station into a fine book.

PH Starling


The history of medicine is a subject which has attracted increased interest of late as is evident by the number of
books published on the subject.

Carole Rawcliffe's book has set out to provide a detailed study of the medicine of the fourteenth and fifteenth century. Comprising nine chapters, the author discusses diseases of the soul, early forms of treatment, through chapters on the occult, the Physician, Surgeon and Apothecary, with the two final chapters concerning women and medicine.

A scan of the index will find no reference to the military, perhaps because no standing medical service existed. Notwithstanding that, those surgeons that did accompany the King's armies on campaign gained valuable experience which they then used and in some cases influenced civilian practice, on their return. Perhaps some mention of their contribution to early medicine was warranted.

Many of the sources quoted are taken from early English text and have been left in their original language. As this source material is used extensively, readers may find this somewhat off-putting and difficult to read.

The book is profusely illustrated from original engravings, all of which contribute to making this volume well worth the cover price.

PH STARLING


This large and fairly expensive publication supersedes all other titles currently in print on the subject. By emphasizing those cutting-edges of research which underpin modern treatment of injuries caused by marine animals, and through following the successful publishing formats of earlier teaching texts by Dr Carl Edmonds and the Surf Life Saving Association of Queensland, this book combines an excellent summary of proven therapeutic measures with an invitation to any doctor faced with cases of marine envenomation to undertake original research.

A major portion of this book is devoted to species of jellyfish and other nematocyst bearers which are recorded as causing human pathology and, on occasions, death. Fatal and near-fatal envenomations by box jellyfish of British Service personnel and their families have occurred in the past in Brunei, hence the standard preventive measures described in the book, though well-known to residents of Brunei Seria and Berakas, are highly relevant for those charged with preventive health instructions for future exercises SETIA KAWAN (Brunei) and PACIFIC KUKRI (Townsville, Australia). Of equal importance are the reports of envenomations caused by other type species of jellyfish from Portugal, Oman, the Caribbean and the Adriatic - from the latter, at least one Operation LODESTAR medevac has been occasioned by complications of jellyfish stings. The continuing global surveillance programme of human pathology caused by jellyfish, which is run by Professor Joseph Burnett of the Dermatology Department of the University of Maryland medical school, is deservedly well covered.

The other sections deal with stings from poisonous fish (stingrays, stone fish and the like) together with the problems caused by ingestion of toxins (ciguatera and scombroid) accumulated in large predatory fish. Puffer fish ('fugu') poisoning is also dealt with in some detail. Appropriately in a book whose foreword is written by Dr Struan Sutherland (the doyen of Australian research into animal toxins and venoms) a section on the first aid treatment for injuries inflicted by various species is immediately followed by their hospital treatment regimes.

Negatively, there are some textual repetitions - so often the hallmark of a multi-authored book - and the index is incomplete and in some areas frankly inaccurate. The publishers need to correct both of these defects in a second edition. The colour plates are of excellent quality and are grouped together - an arrangement preferred by this reviewer for quick reference, although there will undoubtedly be others who will wish that the plates had accompanied the appropriate parts of the text.

"Venomous and Poisonous Marine Animals" is highly recommended as a reference text for all who provide medical cover or advice to adventure training expeditions involving diving. It is recommended reading for all those attending the Standard Underwater Medicine Course at INM Alverstoke and as such, should also be in the libraries of all DSCA hospitals and of the AMS Medical Centres at Belize and of Brunei. Individual enthusiasts who are prepared to invest £70 in a copy will be well rewarded by the detail of its contents and the comprehensive introduction to the marine literature - but at this price such persons will only be a small minority of RAMC medical officers.

NK COOPER


Readers of The British Army Review of The Officer will be familiar with Sustainer's accounts of Army life over the past generation and will be delighted that many have been collected and updated in this book. The author was the youngest man to have to do National Service - if he had been born five minutes later he would have escaped - but he stayed in the Army for 31 years anyway and he gives the true and amazing account of his early service as well as many other hilarious vignettes of how life was and indeed is yet for the junior and the very senior members of the Service. He hints that disgraceful conduct and ignominious behaviour in early days is not necessarily a bar to the eventual achievement of high rank and offers useful advice on, among other things, how to get a place on the Army Board (firstly don't join the RAMC) and on the acquisition of medals and of the right type of Dragon (assuredly essential for promotion - you'll have to read the book to find out). There is much, much else and the illustrations alone make this a bargain, with profits going to The Army Benevolent Fund.

JH JOHNSTON