

Managing stress in emergency medical services

By: Seaward BL

Jones and Bartlett Publishers Inc., 40 Tall Pine Drive, Sudbury, MA 01776, United States

US\$23.75, pp 88, ISBN 0 7637 1008 3

Despite the book's title, material covered in *Managing Stress in Emergency Medical Services* is generally applicable to any individual in a society filled with stress. The book has five chapters—namely, the 'Stress of emergency medical services' (EMS), 'Negative effects of stress', 'Effective coping skills', 'Relaxation techniques', and 'A healthier lifestyle'. The framework is psychologically based, and the EMS setting is used in examples or illustrations. The use of simple descriptions, subtitles, and figures makes the book easy to read.

The section on 'Critical incident stress debriefing' is worth mentioning. After an incident, we often concentrate on the effectiveness or the ineffectiveness of our management of it, while the frustration and stress of the front-line personnel are often not even mentioned. Unfortunately, coverage of post-traumatic

stress disorder is only one page long; a more detailed description of the different symptoms may allow EMS readers to seek help should they experience it. The practical advice in the book resembles material taught in stress management workshops, including various relaxation techniques such as diaphragmatic breathing and progressive muscular relaxation. The attempt to cover most subjects about stress in only 88 pages makes each section simple and concise. While the book provides a good summary of stress management workshops, those seeking a discussion about stress specific to EMS may find it lacking.

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Photographic atlas of practical anatomy, volumes 1 and 2

By: Thiel W

Springer-Verlag Hong Kong Ltd., 1702 Tower I, Enterprise Square, 9 Sheung Yuet Road, Kowloon, Hong Kong
HK\$1073.00, pp 429 and pp 435, ISBN 981 4021 46 6

Photographic Atlas of Practical Anatomy was written and edited by Prof Walter Thiel of the University of Graz, Austria. He prepared most of the dissections and photographs himself, assisted only by a couple of medical students. The atlas consists of two volumes: the first covers the abdomen and lower limbs, and the second covers the head, neck, back, and upper limbs.

The dissected cadaveric specimens were prepared by a special preservation technique, which—the author claims—has caused little change in the natural appearance of anatomical structures. The photographs thus provide readers with a sense of clinical reality. Beside each gross anatomical photograph is a companion black and white photograph that contains the labelling. In most sections, the photographs depict beautifully the layers of gross anatomy from the skin, subcutaneous

nerves, fascial layers, and muscular planes, down to the deep vascular, neural, and visceral structures. In addition, various surgical approaches have been included, such as the anterior approach to the cervical spine and the lateral approach to the hip joint. Although the gross anatomy is well illustrated, the surgical approaches used are unfortunately not commonly practised. For instance, the cervical spine can be approached much more easily from the anteromedial to the carotid vessels rather than posterior to them, as described in the atlas.

A short instruction as to how to use the arrows on the black and white photographs would be useful for first-time users of these books. The text that accompanies the photographs is very concise, and the important names are bold-faced for easy reading. Unlike

conventional anatomy textbooks, there is no detailed description of the relationships between the different anatomical structures. As such, these two volumes may be useful for surgical residents, but not for medical students or those who have little prior anatomical training.

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Emergency medicine: a comprehensive study guide, fifth edition

Ed: Tintinalli JE, Kelen GD, Stapczynski JS
McGraw-Hill Book Company, Suite 2310, One Hung To Road, Kwun Tong, Kowloon, Hong Kong
US\$149.00, pp 2127, ISBN 0 07 065351 8

Emergency Medicine: A Comprehensive Study Guide is a large, single-volume, hardcover reference work, which contains 304 chapters in 26 sections. Now in its fifth edition, this comprehensive study guide presents a thorough overview of issues pertinent to the specialty of emergency medicine, yet its depth is sufficient to inform and educate experienced physicians. Frequent tables, figures, diagrams, and illustrations aid in communicating the information. Each chapter is well referenced, although—as with all large textbooks—some of the most recently published literature has not been cited. There is also some inconsistency in the referencing, because while most chapters are followed by a ‘References’ section, some refer to a ‘Bibliography.’

When compared with the fourth edition, three sections have been removed, including two on acute symptoms and signs in adults and children, and one on common implantable devices. These have been replaced by three sections entitled ‘Shock’, ‘Analgesia, Anesthesia and sedation’, and ‘Special patients’ (such as intravenous drug users and elderly, obese, homeless, and mentally or physically disabled patients).

A large section on ‘Resuscitation problems and techniques’ gives invaluable information on the epidemiology, pathophysiology, prevention, and acute management of cardiopulmonary problems. No mention is made, however, of the advisory statements of the International Liaison Committee on Resuscitation. It may be that chapters were submitted to press before these guidelines were published but, even so, little mention is made of the interesting cross-Atlantic debates that characterised the 1990s.

A state-of-the-art section on ‘Principles of imaging’ includes information on contrast studies, emergency department sonography, computed tomography, and magnetic resonance imaging. It is practical, of appropriate length and depth, and extremely relevant for emergency physicians. Some conflicting views emerge, but these merely reflect reality. No reference is made, however, to the principles of more commonly used radiological techniques—standard plain radiography—and the potential adverse effects of X-rays, especially when used inappropriately. There is also little reference to the application of information technology at the interface between the emergency department and radiology services, the use of digitalised films, and picture archiving and communications systems. The levels of evidence on which expert recommendations are made is not clear, and practical issues and gaps in knowledge requiring further research are frequently not emphasised. A clear definition of the specialty of emergency medicine and how this differs between countries and continents is not described, and the structure and training programmes of the service are not explained.

Emergency Medicine: A Comprehensive Study Guide is otherwise a well-prepared and stimulating reference work, which I would recommend to any colleague within or outside the specialty who wishes to invest in a textbook on emergency medicine.

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