



## ENVIRONMENTAL MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

David J Steedman  
Oxford University Press (1994)  
211 pages. Price £16.95

Where man and his environment meet there is bound to be friction. This book is, however, the reverse of the many books which list the adverse effects man has upon nature. It concentrates upon the impact of the environment, both natural and artificial, on man.

The book forms part of an excellent series from Oxford University Press on emergency medicine aimed at the doctor on the spot, and some aspects such as cardiopulmonary resuscitation and children's accidents are not detailed as they are found in other volumes. This volume covers problems of temperature and pressure, drowning, lightning injury, poisoning, bites, and radiation and chemical accidents. It gives advice on the cause, rescue, and immediate and definitive treatment. The author has tried to follow a standard layout for each subject with highlighted key points but, because of the diverse subjects, this is not always consistent.

The text, by design, tends to be brief, but occasionally, as in the chapter on lightning, the author provides a readable and detailed description of the incidence and pathology. Overall, the book is excellent for quick reference or background reading, and each chapter ends with a reading list for those who wish to find out more.

Many doctors are involved in outdoor pursuits and would find this an excellent companion, and even those whose furthest expedition is to the local supermarket would benefit from having it available for reference. You never know where lightning will strike...

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## TEACHING PALLIATIVE CARE: ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Roderick D MacLeod and Chris James (eds)  
Patten Press, Penzance (1994)  
64 pages. Price £5.95

Teaching palliative care, like motherhood and Mozart's music, must be a 'good thing'. This booklet of proceedings of a one-day seminar carries the subtitle 'issues and implications', and looks at how palliative care can be taught. It has a two-pronged approach, with issues being addressed from an educational as well as a medical viewpoint. This is to be welcomed as there are generic issues in palliative care which need to be explored.

This is not a textbook, and I enjoyed it for the fact that it raised issues of whether, how and why to teach palliative care. The

multidisciplinary approach is mentioned, if only to flag up problems with multidisciplinary teaching. Generally, the text avoids the use of jargon and most of the ideas are presented freshly, with appropriate references given by the contributors. The tension between a reflective and action-based approach are explored, with Schön's *Educating the reflective practitioner* being acknowledged as an influence.

But where is the general practitioner in all of this? Little is made of the crucial role of the family doctor, with the implication that it is the general practitioner who needs this teaching. The general practitioner's place in palliative care provision should be as the coordinator of all the available resources: the conductor of the orchestra. The family doctor is still best placed, when the family is closest at both ends of life, to provide that crucial stability.

If you want to ponder the questions raised in *Teaching palliative care*, there are plenty: if you are looking for answers, there is scope in this book for thought and guidance.

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## ASSESSING ELDERLY PEOPLE IN HOSPITAL AND COMMUNITY CARE

Ian Philp (ed)  
Farrand Press, London (1994)  
155 pages. Price £14.95

There are four situations in which assessment of elderly people is necessary: in the community when there is a social problem, in the community when there is a health problem or as part of a health check, in hospital as part of a multidisciplinary assessment, and as part of a research project either in hospital or in the community. Each of these assessments is different in purpose and content. A major problem has been the need to produce an assessment technology which acknowledges the requirements of each of the different areas where assessment is needed and achieves at least a working congruence between the different instruments used in each area.

This book sets out to examine these issues. A distinguished group of contributors has been gathered together to discuss specific areas. As well as comprehensive assessment in hospital, specific attention is given to activities of daily living, mental assessments, social functioning, the well-being of old people and carer burden. Fiona Ross writes a chapter about assessment in the community and deals with annual health checks for those aged 75 years and over and 'community care' management assessment. She advocates the use of the staged approach described in *Health checks for people aged 75 and over* (Occasional paper 59, RCGP, 1993) and discusses critically the benefits, cost