

Editor's comment

Panic stations



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Emergency medicine was never one of my favourite topics. It was OK as a student, with plenty of supervision and people to step in and guide you through the situation. But once I was on my own, I began to think that I really knew nothing about the basics. As a GP trainee in Scotland I carried a defibrillator in my car when I was on call. Fortunately I never had to use it.

Once I arrived in Labrador, as the only doctor on the coast, emergencies became my responsibility, albeit with well-trained nurse practitioners to help. They quickly realised that the quieter I became the more concerned I was about the patient. Fortunately help was only a phone call away to my referral hospital over the water in Newfoundland.

Text books of emergency medicine are about as daunting as the subject itself. So, this edition of *CME*, with its concise and well-thought-out selection of articles on emergency medicine topics, should become an invaluable addition to any

doctor's collection. It will be particularly useful to those working in remote areas, with little, if any, help on hand.

Walter Kloeck and Anne Millum's article on the revised resuscitation guidelines is particularly useful. We all know that CPR is usually performed inadequately – by lay people and health professionals alike. But this article not only gives clear guidelines on how to perform early, high-quality CPR, but it gives the rationale behind the change. Using the example of priming a water pump to help aid in understanding why cardiac compressions should not be interrupted is masterly. Understanding the body's oxygen reserve is also an important part of understanding why keeping blood moving initially is more important than getting air into the lungs. It is this type of approach to explaining resuscitation techniques that will help people to remember the all-important basics and perhaps help to improve the survival rate of people who collapse outside a hospital.

Efraim Kramer's article on emergency care of obese patients should stimulate anyone who needs to lose weight to do so and anyone caring for obese patients to urge them to modify their lifestyles immediately! Charl van Loggerenberg deals with another very topical emergency problem with his article on illicit drug use in emergency situations and also with poisoning – something else that will be particularly useful for those in remote locations.

The airway is paramount in emergency care and Pat Saffy and Louise and Andreas Engelbrecht deal with the difficult airway and the use of non-invasive positive pressure ventilation respectively. Andreas Engelbrecht also covers invasive ventilation in an emergency.

Altogether, Walter Kloeck as guest editor and his team of emergency care experts have put together an excellent edition of *CME* that should stay on the shelves for many years to come.

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