

Principles and Practice of Emergency Neurology. Handbook for Emergency Physicians

Edited by Sid M Shah and Kevin M Kelly. Pp. ix + 438. R680. Cambridge University Press. 2003. ISBN 0-521-00980-4. (Available from SAMA-HMPG. Price R680, members R620.)

This American text is aimed at the emergency physician and emergency medicine registrars. In our country, those intending to do the Master of Philosophy degree in emergency medicine would also benefit from this text. Most chapters are written by a team of an emergency physician and a neurologist, and the contributors are mainly from Michigan and Pennsylvania.

The chapters include an introduction to the topic, emergency assessment, clinical findings, pathology and radiology investigations, management, and disposition. Each chapter ends with a list of 'pearls' and 'pitfalls'.

The chapter on neuroradiology deals with CT versus MRI imaging for selected neurological conditions, as well as selective angiography. Imaging for craniospinal trauma is included. The chapters on altered mental status and seizures are comprehensive and offer an excellent approach to these topics.

The musculoskeletal and neurogenic pain chapter is divided into sections dealing with facial pain, neck and upper extremity pain, thoracic and truncal pain, low back and lower extremity pain. This provides a fresh approach to the assessment of pain in the emergency department. The chapter on non-traumatic spinal cord emergencies also emphasises back pain as a significant presenting complaint to the emergency physician.

The approach to the evaluation and management of neuropsychiatric patients is well described – dividing this group of patients into two groups is most valuable.

Several chapters are dedicated to paediatric conditions. Information on hydrocephalus and shunts in children is excellent, giving clear instruction on the manual evaluation to test CSF shunt patency. Other paediatric chapters include cerebrovascular disorders, infection of the CNS, and seizures.

A significant chapter on neurotoxicology includes 'drug syndromes', altered mental status, hyperthermia, environmental neurotoxins such as electrical injuries, and envenomation.

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