

The Gist of Emergency Medicine

Michael O. Hebb. 244 pp. Adam Hebb, 1998. \$49. ISBN 0-9695693-5-1

The *Gist of Emergency Medicine* is just that. This concise little book grew from a collection of notes written by the author to help him pass the American Board exams. Since then it has grown to fill a niche for candidates wishing to brush up on the essentials as they prepare for their own emergency medicine (EM) qualifying exams. But *The Gist* does more than exam preparation. It is full of wise tips for dealing with patients during busy shifts, and it prompted me to perform a mental self-assessment.

It is easier to define *The Gist* by what it isn't. It isn't a comprehensive treatise describing cutting edge emergency medicine, but it does cover the essentials briefly. It doesn't cite the literature, but does remain faithful to accepted guidelines and common sense. It cannot be used as a reference for real-time patient management, but it is a useful study guide. It isn't a peer-reviewed consensus document, but it is a wise compilation of thoughts from an experienced emergency physician.

Everything about the book is home-spun, including its unorthodox grouping of contents. For example, gastrointestinal and genitourinary problems are combined in one chapter, while septic shock is a chapter on its own. The section on acute myocardial infarction is typical. It lists important treatments to remember during an exam (particularly those easily forgotten) without providing detailed information. It lists the differential diagnoses that examiners tend to ask for, but doesn't go into detail about diagnostic procedures, epidemiology or treatment regimens. The section on pediatric fever doesn't explain how or when to perform a septic work-up,

assuming that readers are already familiar with published guidelines.

This book will appeal particularly to 2 groups. The first, EM exam candidates, will appreciate the tips on "examsmanship." The second group, experienced emergency physicians, will find the book useful for assessing their basic knowledge and attitudes toward patients and coworkers. The author plans to update *The Gist* in 2000, and he is keenly interested in receiving suggestions from readers.

The first hard copy edition has been sold out. A second edition is expected in 2000 or 2001. As of today, *The Gist of Emergency Medicine* can be purchased on a floppy disk for Can\$49 or as an electronic file from the author (\$39). The electronic Microsoft Word document is accompanied by a software version that can be used on Palm personal data assistants. Further information is available at <http://erbook.com/>.

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Emergency CT Scans of the Head: a Practical Atlas

A. Adam Cwinn, Stephen Z. Grahovac. Mosby-Year Book, Inc., 1998. 195 pp. \$117.

Emergency *CT Scans of the Head: a Practical Atlas* is the best book available to emergency physicians on this subject. Cwinn and Grahovac have written a comprehensive, systematic, and user-friendly approach to head CT interpretation, which provides excellent, detailed discussions of a wide range of head CT scans. Normal CTs, typical pathology and normal variants are discussed in detail.

The first chapter deserves special mention. By providing an historical background and reviewing the physics and anatomy behind scan analysis, it provides a solid foundation for understanding the images we interpret every day. The chapter ends with a scan interpretation checklist. The remaining chapters cover specific topics including trauma, stroke, subarachnoid hemorrhage and aneurysms, non-traumatic hemorrhage and vascular malformations, intracranial neoplasms, intracranial infections, miscellaneous conditions and normal variations.

Each chapter begins with a topical discussion and ends with relevant CT reproductions. Each figure has a succinct description explaining the pertinent diagnostic findings. The book is practical and well indexed, enabling "on-duty" physicians to compare and contrast the book's images with "clinical" CT scans under review.

Emergency CT Scans of the Head is compact and easy to read. Emergency physicians working without immediate radiology back up will find it an invaluable reference when agonizing over an equivocal head CT. This book is a "MUST BUY" for every ED academic coordinator.

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The book can be ordered directly from Mosby-Year Book, or ordered through www.medbookstore.com.

Editor's note: Homer, Virgil, Shakespeare and Dostoevsky: All have made immeasurable contributions to our literature. Now Cwinn and Grahovac have made the biggest contribution yet. This book is the most useful radiology reference available for the ED. Buy it! [G.I.]