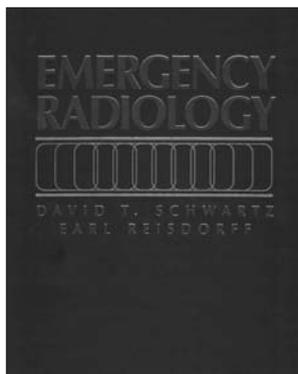


Emergency Radiology. Edited by David T. Schwartz, Earl Reisdorff. 672 pp. McGraw-Hill Inc. 2000. \$224.75. ISBN 0-07-050827-5.

This is the first edition of what will become a “classic” reference text, appropriate for emergency medicine residents, practising clinicians and medical students. Most of the contributors are US emergency physicians, with a few radiologists tossed in for good measure. The result is a practical and clinically relevant textbook.

Most chapters follow a similar format; they begin with a discussion of clinical decision making and review the indications for radiographic studies. This is followed by discussions of anatomy, physiology and the injury biomechanics underlying the radiographic findings. Then there is a section on radiographic technique, followed by the core section, “Radiographic analysis.” Other topics include common abnormalities, errors in interpretation, normal variants and controversies.

Each skeletal component (e.g., the spine) is covered in its own chapter, and soft tissue imaging is broken down into plain films, CT and ultrasonography. Specific chapters discuss the trauma victim, the pediatric patient and the poisoned patient. There is a section on child abuse. Emergency department ultrasound is addressed, but only in a cursory 10-page overview.



The book presents an appropriate selection of images, and its production quality is excellent. Tables reinforce the key points, and many of the images are accompanied by drawings that detail the radiographic findings.

Emergency Radiology will be a good reference for practising emergency physicians. Although this book is expensive, it will make a useful addition to any emergency department.

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Ward Life. The Apprenticeship of a Young Writer as a Hospital Clerk.

Andrew Steinmetz. Véhicule Press, 1999. 188 pp. \$15.95. ISBN 1-55065-121-8.

This is a rare literary glimpse into the life of a Canadian hospital. The book's subtitle identifies the perspective. The author worked part time as an evening ward clerk at Montreal's “Royal Vicious Hospital,” a nationally recognized Centre of Excellence in hallway medicine.

His hospital career began in the intensive care unit (ICU), where he envied

the time the doctors and nurses had to write (chart). He decided to write himself, recording scenes, impressions and observations of hospital life. In the true Canadian hospital tradition of rationing, restructuring and re-engineering, he was bumped from the ICU to emergency.

The book is a series of sketches — vignettes of emergency life, ranging from a few lines to a few pages, much like a working shift. The staccato writing style is also true to life. Phrases, comments and blurbs dominate. It is rich Canadiana, complete with bed closures, long waiting times, Leonard Cohen, Don Cherry and “blame the Health Minister.”

The real joy is its insightful humour. The emergency nurses' handover rounds are described: “This is their time. You may not disturb them, like when animals are eating.” New perspectives are provided on everyday things. CT scans are “a montage of ink blots,” a chest tube is like “a metal tap in a maple tree” and the psychiatry assessment unit is “a six bed lost and found.”

Ward Life is a quick, pleasurable read for any emergency physician. It is a fresh look at familiar predicaments and recognizable patients, through the clear eyes of a sophisticated nonmedical observer.

“Not everyone is put off by this place. Maybe he's passed time in a Calcutta slum.”

Garth Dickinson, MD

University of Ottawa
Ottawa, Ont.