

BOOK REVIEW - Dr Bill Casey**Save Lives, Save Limbs**

Hans Husum, Mads Gilbert, Torben Wisborg

ISBN 983-9747-42-8

Price: US \$40 (North), US \$10 (South)

This soft-cover book is written by three Norwegian doctors, two anaesthesiologists and a surgeon, with many years experience working in conflict zones such as Afghanistan, Burma, Cambodia, Kurdistan and Angola. Their particular interest and expertise is in the management of victims of mine injuries. Drawing on their experience, they have written a unique book that is not only aimed at doctors and professional health-care workers but also aims to empower rural communities, the potential victims of mine injuries, to initiate basic and subsequently, sophisticated treatment of the injured.

The book is in six sections. The first combines information on the different types of mines that may be encountered and the injuries they can cause with a tutorial on basic physiology and the body's response to injury. The second section is on basic life support: airway, breathing, circulation and has sections on the management of burns and multiple casualties. In the third section, more advanced life support techniques are illustrated including endotracheal intubation, chest drain insertion, limb fasciotomy and damage control laparotomy. The use of tourniquets is condemned, as is "ideal" but too expensive amputation. The importance of keeping victims warm and orally rehydrating and feeding them is repeatedly stressed.

Subsequent sections contain a series of fascinating case reports illustrating the management of injured patients by their peers with minimal equipment in difficult circumstances and the concepts of the "chain of survival" and the "Village University". The authors develop their thesis that primary trauma management should and must be provided by those most at risk of injury. They describe in detail how villagers can be taught basic and subsequently sophisticated life support techniques. The latter are taught using anaesthetised animals that can subsequently be eaten!

Copious practical advice on suitable drugs, fluid replacement, feeding, surgical techniques and

improvisation is given and reflects the authors' own extensive experience. Examples of charts that can be used to record details of injuries and their management are given and their subsequent use to audit the effectiveness of treatment are given.

The book is comprehensively illustrated with photographs taken in combat zones as well as line drawings and, where appropriate, X-rays. It is well written and easy to read although the use of English is occasionally a little idiosyncratic: inlet and outlet wounds rather than the more usual entry and exit. I was a little surprised to find no mention of the interosseous route of access to the circulation in the section on venous access in children, and that a two rather than four compartment method of lower limb fasciotomy was described. I assume this is a reflection of the authors' practical experience in the field.

I have no reservations about commending this book to all doctors and health-care workers who are involved in teaching or practicing resuscitation either in the developed or the developing world. It is well written, well illustrated, reasonably priced and I am sure everyone will learn much from reading it.

Copies can be obtained from:

Third World Network,
228 Macalister Rd, 10400
Penang, MALAYSIA
Fax: 60 4 2298106 or 60 4 364505
Tel: 60 4 2293511 or 2293713
Email: twn@igc.apc.org
Website: www.twinside.org.sg

or

Tromso Mine Victim Resource Centre
PO Box 80
N 9038 Ritoe
NORWAY
Tel: 47 776 26227
Fax: 47 776 28073
Email: tmc@rito.no