

**BOOK REVIEW**

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***Paramedic Field Guide***

Bob Elling, MPA, NREMT-P; Marilyn Jackson, PhD, RN; Lee Jackson, PhD, RN  
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Reviewed by

**Kathryn Eastwood**

MICA Paramedic, Ambulance Victoria,  
Melbourne, Australia.

This book, written by an EMT-P and two nurses, appears on initial inspection to have been designed for use in the field. It consists of an area for phone numbers inside the cover, and has a plastic spiral spine to allow the book to remain open when it is laid flat. Multi-coloured 'quick-find' tabs allow for easy navigation, while the weather and stain resistant format of the book provide it with increased durability and protection. The book has been produced in a small, presumably, pocket size format to make it more portable; but it is so thick that it would be impractical for paramedics to carry around in their pockets. However, stored in a bag, or in the ambulance, its size would make it quite practical for quick reference in cramped working conditions.

Using the 'quick-find' tabs the book is divided into sections which generally start with some basic anatomical diagrams related to the topic, definitions of various terms, and a very brief description of some relevant basic pathological processes. While the book contains some useful clinical management procedures, explained in a step-by-step format, the procedures are often sourced from the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons, which may not be applicable to all ambulance services. Much of the information is presented in tabular format which does allow for ease of reading.

The first section on 'Assessment' contains some patient assessment acronyms, which are obviously US based and would be foreign to some services. Some general vital signs ranges are given, followed by assessment tools for various patient presentations and a useful section containing a conversion table and some formulae for conducting conversions.

Section two covers 'Airway and Respiratory' and contains some basic capnography, blood gas values, acid/base balance information, pathological signs and symptoms, and instruction on insertion of various airway management devices.

The section on 'Trauma' briefly lists various fracture types, dermatomes, information on sprains and strains, types of thoracic injury, instruction on decompression of a tension pneumothorax, head injuries, burns and then goes through some principles of safe lifting.

The 'Pharmacology' section has information on various injection sites, blood groups, drug formulae, safe medication administration tools, common drug name endings, terminology, drug categories and some brief drug toxicology.

The fifth section covers 'Medical: Neuro and Behavioural' and has information on seizures, strokes, psychiatric disorders, suicide, stress, and communication strategies for various cultures. This last point seemed a little out of place in this section and may have been more relevant in the 'Assessment' section.

The section on 'Cardiovascular' provides many ECG read-outs showing various arrhythmias; management processes for a few arrhythmias, blood enzymes in acute coronary syndrome, and risk factors using the American Heart Association fibrinolytic checklist.

The 'Medical: Infectious, Endocrine, Environmental and Allergy' section has common laboratory test values, types of shock (which again may have been better placed in the cardiovascular section) and further information covering infectious diseases, endocrine disorders, environmental emergencies including hyper/hypothermia, diving injuries and altitude illness, and allergic reactions.

The section which deals with 'Medical: GI, GU and Haematological' contains useful information on nasogastric tube insertion and general information on gastrostomy tubes, renal failure, and gastric oesophageal reflux disease.

The 'Ob/Gyn' and Neonatal Resuscitation' section provides information on the stages of foetal development and of labour, APGAR, newborn vital signs and neonatal resuscitation. The next section on 'Paediatrics' includes information on assessment, airway obstruction, resuscitation, intraosseous insertion, endotracheal tube sizes, trouble-shooting respiratory deterioration in the intubated child and child abuse.

The next section on 'Special Operations' is perhaps a little more region-specific. Again, very brief basic information is given into things such as air ambulance landing zones, Hazmat signs, nerve, chemical and biological agents and triaging patients in a multi-casualty incident. Information relating to incident command structure and EMS branch components are more relative to the American workplace than in EMT practice, generally.

The final section is titled 'Communications and Documentation' and provides some information on appropriate language for handover and documentation, what information is important to include in patient documentation, and lists of commonly misspelled terms, abbreviations, symbols, prefixes and suffixes.

Generally, the information contained in this book is by no means comprehensive or complete, and as such it would probably not be a suitable learning tool for new paramedics. However it is my belief that the book was not intended for new paramedics, but as a handy reference tool for the practicing paramedic to use as supplement to his/her own knowledge, rather than to gain new information from the book. Used in this setting I do believe that some paramedics may find the book as a useful tool to expand on their basic patient assessment skills.

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