

## Emergency medicine in a page

Jeffrey M. Caterino and Scott Kahan



Malden (MA): Blackwell Publishing; 2003. 316 pp. US\$29.95 (paper) ISBN 1-4051-0357-4

Rating: \*\*\*

Audience: Final-year medical students and interns

**Content:** Caterino and Kahan's handbook of emergency medicine targets burgeoning trainees at a particularly difficult stage: the final year of medical school and the intern year. Good information sources that bridge the lecture theatre and clinical world are rare. Therefore, for many, knowledge acquisition occurs in rapid step-wise increments that can be decidedly uncomfortable. This book can help ease this transition.

Handbooks on emergency medicine generally struggle to balance the enormous breadth of the specialty with the need to provide adequate detail on individual topics. Each page in this book summarizes a single problem. The book assumes a certain amount of clinical experience: basic terms are not defined in the text, and there is liberal use of common abbreviations.

**Strengths:** The breadth of topics covered is excellent. The format is consistent on every page, with headings always located in the same place. This allows readers to access information-quickly, a helpful feature on a busy shift in the emergency department. Caterino is the chief resident in an emergency training program in Pittsburgh; Kahan is a recently graduated MD. The content is concise and up to date.

**Limitations:** The authors make no exceptions to their rule of devoting a single page to each topic. This rigidity is a failing. The sections on the stabilization of critically ill patients — the

ABCs of airway, breathing and circulation — are overly brief. Resuscitation of diverse medical and surgical patients is essential to emergency medicine and often represents the appeal for those who decide to pursue careers in the specialty. Readers will need to look elsewhere for this information.

Unfortunately, there are no pages devoted to the approach to certain symptoms. Also, students who are visual learners should be wary of this book: the text is in point form, and there are no pictures.

Although trainees will outgrow much of this book by the conclusion of their intern year, by then it will have provided a solid foothold in their learning curve. Those who train in emergency medicine may find a secondary use for the book as a guide for ongoing study. The book offers affordable good value to its target audience.

### Steve Choi

Editorial Fellow

*CMAJ*

Emergency Physician

Ottawa, Ont.

This book is available at your local book retailer, or through the publisher at [www.blackwellpublishing.com/](http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/)

## Canadian Medical Law, 3rd ed.

Barney Sneiderman, John C. Irvine and Philip H. Osborne



Toronto: Carswell; 2003. 766 pp. \$85 (cloth) ISBN 0-459-24074-9

Rating: \*\*\*\*

Audience: Health professionals

**Content:** This text serves as a firm introduction to the basic principles of health law as it applies to negligence (malpractice), liability, compensation, public health and mental health.

Its review of the complex legal issues surrounding reproductive choices (wrongful birth, sterilization, abortion, maternal-fetal conflict), death, organ donation, euthanasia, mental competence and refusal of treatment, life-prolonging treatment, and advance health care directives goes well beyond what one would expect in a didactic text. The descriptions of how the courts have delved into and wrestled with such difficult issues are concise, instructive and fascinating to read.

**Strengths:** The format chosen by the authors to present the issues is effective and noteworthy. Chapters begin with a summary of actual legal cases that are used to illustrate the issues. The principles visited are reviewed, and comprehensive references to legal and health sources are listed. The writers have succeeded in presenting a teaching text that is interesting, informative and captivating.

Reviewing this text reminds one that there is so much more to health law than malpractice; it opens one's mind to the complexities of our modern law and how those complexities affect the treatment and care of our citizens.

This text is a must-read for any health professional interested in medicolegal matters or health institution risk management.

**Limitations:** The only limitation — and a minor one indeed — is a reliance on somewhat dated cases in Part I: General Principles. These could have been supplanted by more modern examples from case law that the reader might relate to more easily.

### John M. Bonn

Emergency Physician and Legal

Consultant

Brighton, Ont.

This book is available at your local book retailer, or through the publisher at [www.carswell.com/law\\_index.asp](http://www.carswell.com/law_index.asp)

Items reviewed are rated on a 4-star scale (4 = excellent)