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Paramedic Practice Today: Above and Beyond' - Volumes 1 and 2 Aehlert, B. Editor 2009

Bill Lord

Bill.Lord@med.monash.edu.au

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BOOK REVIEW

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Paramedic Practice Today: Above and Beyond - Volumes 1 and 2

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Reviewed by

Bill Lord

Senior Lecturer

Monash University Department of Community Emergency Health and Paramedic Practice,
Melbourne, Australia

Among the many books on the market aimed at the student paramedic market, this one stands out as one of the largest compendium, with its two volumes spanning approximately 2,500 pages and accompanying DVDs.

Like most paramedic texts originating in the US this publication is specifically designed to develop the knowledge and skills required to enable US paramedic registration. The preface is explicit in stating that the book is designed to help students “achieve complete success on the National Registry examination” and to prepare students for “any challenge” they are likely to face as a paramedic. In order to meet this promise, the authors have included content designed to enable the development of learning outcomes prescribed by the current US Emergency Medical Services (EMS) curriculum.

Each chapter begins with a comprehensive list of learning objectives, with the emphasis on the development of clinical skills and the recall of information to guide decision making and management of a broad range of health emergencies. The learning within each chapter is supported by case studies, practice tips, chapter summaries that highlight the major points of importance, and a chapter quiz that enables practice at information recall at a level that is presumably commensurate with the demands of the National Registry examination. In addition companion DVDs illustrate clinical skills through the use of animation and video.

While this publication deserves commendation for its efforts in designing instruction that aims to comprehensively address the US paramedic competencies, markets outside of the US may find that sections of the text are made redundant by a need to extend concepts that require a more detailed foundation knowledge in undergraduate degree courses that are becoming discipline entry level courses for paramedics in countries such as Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. For example, the level of anatomy and physiology described by this text is unlikely to provide an adequate foundation for degree level paramedic courses which typically prescribe specialist anatomy and physiology texts designed for health professionals across allied disciplines. In addition, this text may not provide sufficient depth of discussion on topics such as population health, health promotion

and disease prevention, health systems, epidemiology, or research methodology and evidence based practice.

Although it is recognised that the content is strongly influenced by the US national paramedic curriculum, the coverage afforded to some topics appears to be poorly correlated with the frequency of specific health problems encountered by paramedics. A clear example of this is seen in the limited amount of information devoted to the assessment and management of pain, (one of the most common complaints that paramedics will encounter) compared with the discussion devoted to the management of lightning injuries, a problem that many paramedics will never encounter in their life time. However, this criticism reflects the relevance of the national competencies, and should be considered in light of the very specific target audience described in the preface.

While the utility of this text may be limited outside the intended audience, there is nevertheless much content that will be of great value to paramedic students in settings outside the US, and the text provides a valuable reference for all paramedics. Before prescribing this text, educators should not only consider their local needs, but should also consider the physical capacity of students to safely carry these volumes to and from classes.

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