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# Paramedics in Australia. Contemporary challenges of practice. Peter O'Meara, Carolyn F. Grbich. (Eds).Reviewed by Malcolm Woollard

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#### **BOOK REVIEW**

**Article 990369** 

Paramedics in Australia. Contemporary challenges of practice.
Peter O'Meara, Carolyn F. Grbich. (Eds).

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It was with great pleasure that I was asked to review this text, but I must declare a potential conflict of interests. Pre-hospital care is a very small world indeed, and consequently I know one of the editors and a number of the authors personally. However, any possible bias associated with this acquaintance will have been more than offset by my dislike for reading textbooks! This latter attribute was not, I'm delighted to say, a problem with respect to this original, interesting, and well-written book.

Paramedics in Australia is not a traditional paramedic textbook and indeed the combination of subject matter that it addresses is unique in my experience. The book is divided into three sections. The first of these contains three chapters detailing the fascinating history of the Australian Ambulance Service; a discussion of paramedic culture (which is surprisingly similar throughout the developed world); and an exploration of paramedic practice in rural and regional areas.

The second section addresses challenges in paramedic practice, and its chapters cover topics such as professionalism (a current hot topic with respect to salary levels and the drive towards national registration); evidence based paramedic practice (in which paramedics are providing increasing influence as the profession becomes academicised); clinical judgement (an essential skill as we increasingly consider admission avoidance strategies); paramedics and the mentally ill (an area of high demand in Australia and elsewhere in the world); and legal and ethical issues (also important in our increasing litigious society).

The final section includes chapters on educating paramedics (and in particular the move to university-based education) and this links well to the following chapters on working in ambulance service organisations and the move from academia to clinical practice. Communication and teamwork are also addressed (key to successful patient care and integration with other health and emergency service professionals). The final chapter addresses a topic of considerable interest and importance to us all – managing emotion, work, and stress. Mental ill health has a much higher prevalence amongst paramedics than amongst the public more generally, but is a topic all too often overlooked.

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The majority of the authors are practicing or former paramedics: others are paramedic educators or specialists in their fields. All bring a wealth of experience and expertise to this text and despite the number of authors all present their subjects in a highly readable style. This is not just another paramedic textbook but rather offers a unique perspective on what is required of paramedics to finish the transition to becoming a well-rounded profession. This book will appeal to anyone with an interest in pre-hospital care, including academics, educators, health historians, sociologists, and anyone considering a career in the ambulance service. Above all else it deserves a space on every pre-hospital practitioner's book shelf, whether they have just started their career or can apply their own experiences to the lessons it contains.

#### **Publication Details**

Paramedics in Australia. Contemporary challenges of practice.

Peter O'Meara, Carolyn F. Grbich. (Eds).

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