

Doctor's bag companion: Paediatric and adult reference

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This reference book is designed to be used to find medication doses and guidance for other management easily and promptly. Its target audience is those who are already familiar

with the treatment of acute conditions, as it is not an introductory or wordy textbook. The book comprises many lists of medication doses in addition to flowcharts and wound photographs. It would be useful as a quick guide when presented with patients with life-threatening emergencies, and would also be beneficial to have readily available in general practices and on general practitioner (GP) home visits.

The title of the book is potentially misleading, as it is not simply a practical working summary of the potential administration of medications available under the Prescriber Bag medications provided under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS).

The book is divided into several sections. First, the Australian Resuscitation Council's flowcharts for life support are reproduced. A series of lists of medication doses and routes of administration for emergencies potentially seen in general practice follows. Doses of antibiotics for common conditions are included. The book then focuses on lists of treatments for sexually transmissible infections, in addition to extensive sections covering palliative care treatment, wound management and burns.

In a general practice context, this book is most beneficial when it is easily accessible at times when patients present with acute emergencies, such as anaphylaxis, asthma, seizures, pain or cardiac arrest. In many practices, acute emergencies are uncommon. However, when they do occur, GPs can be expected to respond appropriately and effectively. Using this book will greatly assist GPs to make quick decisions in pressured situations about appropriate medications and dosages. It would also be a useful place to confirm appropriate doses for antibiotics and palliative care medications.

The paediatric sections are easy to find and follow. A two-page spread, with medication doses, is included for each weight, eliminating the need to spend time calculating doses per kilogram. The back cover also lists weights that can be used for children of various ages when it is impractical to weigh a paediatric patient.

Unfortunately, for the use of adrenaline in cardiac arrest, the authors have chosen to give the volume of the larger 10 mL ampoule (1:10,000) of adrenaline. It is likely that many GPs will only have a supply of the smaller 1 mL vial (1:1,000) as that is what is available in the PBS Prescriber Bag order. This may lead to confusion and error in the unfamiliar and pressured situation of a cardiac arrest in a general practice.

It must also be noted that other medications not included in the Prescriber Bag supply are listed, for example, ceftriaxone for meningococcaemia. Naturally, any practitioner should consider which medications they should have available, rather than simply relying on what is available at no cost.

In conclusion, this book would be beneficial for GPs to have available as a reference for acute emergencies and when providing palliative care or

wound management. However, it is not a substitute for obtaining and maintaining a working knowledge in these areas, and practitioners must remain vigilant in relation to calculations of correct doses of medications.

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