

# Book Reviews

**ACLS. Third edition. Volume 1: Certification Preparation. Volume 2: A Comprehensive Review.** By Ken Grauer and Daniel Cavallaro. St. Louis, Missouri, Mosby Lifeline, 1993. v. 1, 368 pp., 277 illustrations. \$19.95 (paper). v. 2, 366 pp., 286 illustrations. \$34.95 (paper). ISBN 0-8016-7069-1.

**ACLS: Mega Code Review Study Cards. Second edition.** By Ken Grauer and Daniel Cavallaro. 64 pp. St. Louis, Missouri, Mosby Lifeline, 1993. \$6.95 (paper). ISBN 8016-7070-5.

This reviewer is someone who likes teaching but is frightened by the thought of having to resuscitate someone; material about advanced cardiac life support has to be very accessible for me to enjoy it. Yet after studying Grauer and Cavallaro's third edition of *ACLS* and the *Mega Code Review Study Cards*, I believe that I could acquit myself well in a code and might even want to *teach* ACLS! This is partly due to a richness of pedagogical aids, such as double-column pages and assorted colors; print sizes and fonts to distinguish the basics from differing layers of detail, which explain and illustrate the concepts; inset "boxes" summarizing the material; profuse illustrations (mostly of rhythm strips); and problems for study. These problems, especially the resuscitation scenarios and many practice examples for arrhythmia interpretation, distinguish this text from the one published by the American Heart Association, which is didactic but not as oriented to decision making and problem solving in emergency care.

Volume 1 is designed to be a comprehensive study guide to review and prepare for the ACLS course. Chapter 1 contains the essence of the ACLS course and includes algorithms for managing various arrhythmias in various clinical situations. Chapters 4 and 5 contain simulated code scenarios, while chapter 6 consists of practice questions similar to the written part of the ACLS certification examination. Other chapters detail the drugs commonly used in cardiopulmonary resuscitation, including dosage and administration, the diagnosis of arrhythmias, intravenous access, and ventilatory support.

Grauer and Cavallaro's recommendations differ in minor ways from those of the American Heart Association, and the authors have been careful to point out the range of acceptable responses and their reasons for recommending a different treatment. Specifically, Grauer and Cavallaro favor higher doses of epinephrine earlier in resuscitation attempts, empirical use of magnesium therapy for ventricular arrhythmias, verapamil rather than adenosine as first choice for some PSVTs, and more cautious dosing of atropine than do the American Heart Association guidelines.

Volume 2 is a clinically pertinent reference source for one who wants to explore cardiopulmonary re-

suscitation beyond the basics. Each topic is posed as a question relevant to the care of patients and is followed with a review of the scientific and empirical literature to show how the question might be answered and what remains unknown. For example, "What is the mechanism of blood flow during CPR?" "How risky is mouth-to-mouth resuscitation?" "Does lay bystander CPR improve survival?"

There is a long section that details current knowledge about management of acute myocardial infarction, including thrombolytic therapy, antiarrhythmics, angioplasty, and emergency cardiac surgery. Another section treats special resuscitation situations, such as near-drowning, cardiac arrest in pregnancy, and cocaine-induced arrest. Additional drugs and more advanced arrhythmia interpretation are followed by sections on pediatric resuscitation and the medicolegal aspects of ACLS.

The *Megacode Review Study Cards* and their container are flimsy, but their content and format are excellent. Not only useful for review and self-study, they could form an educator's notes for an ACLS course. Each set of cards parallels one part of the two-volume book, but in a flashcard format. They are written in a medical vernacular that brings the student immediately into a scenario with specific decisions to be made; e.g., "The patient is unresponsive with a weak pulse, a palpable blood pressure of 60 mmHg, and the rhythm shown; what should you do?" Residencies and ACLS instructors should probably buy both the cards and the books to suit the needs of different learners. Someone whose aim is to prepare for ACLS certification could use *either* the cards or the textbook and need not purchase both.

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**Emergency Medicine Secrets.** Edited by Vincent J. Markovchick, Peter J. Pons, and Richard E. Wolfe. 462 pp., illustrated. Philadelphia, Hanley & Belfus, 1993. \$32.95 (paper). ISBN 1-56053-051-0.

The editors of this text have chosen a question and answer format to convey information about the evaluation, diagnosis, and treatment of a number of emergency medicine topics. The text is divided into major sections, such as trauma, primary complaints, cardiovascular system, and toxicologic emergencies. Each section is further subdivided into individual chapters. For each chapter, specific questions are listed with their corresponding answers. The type of information presented is quite variable from one chapter to the next. References are listed at the end of each chapter, but individual facts or statistics are not specifically referenced. The questions listed for