Book Reviews

The Dressing Station: A Surgeon's Chronicle of War and Medicine

Jonathan Kaplan

New York, NY: Grove Press, 2001

US \$25.00, 407 pages, hardcover

The world is shrinking.

The high rate of international travel, the global economy, and the war against terror are changing our culture's place in the world and the role of medicine within that culture. Gone are the days when a medical professional could focus on the diseases endemic in his or her geographic area. The whole globe is now within the jurisdiction of the clinician, and medical experiences that were once on the fringe are now commonplace.

The Dressing Station was written by South African surgeon Jonathan Kaplan. Kaplan attended medical school in South Africa and then finished his training in Great Britain and the United States. His book details his experiences in a variety of situations and obscure locations. Part biography, part adventure writing, *The Dressing Station* takes its readers to exotic locales where colorful characters often appear.

Within its pages we read Kaplan's account of his training in apartheid South Africa and the circumstances that led him to the United States. He writes of working behind the lines in war zones in Kurdistan and Mozambique. He describes the experience of being a flight doctor out of London and a ship physician on the South China Sea. His clinical experiences are both diverse and unique, and he writes with an entertaining style and quick wit.

If one is looking for an entertaining read describing life as a medical professional in remote places, then *The Dressing Station* is an excellent resource. Kaplan's writing is brutally honest and sincere, and whether he is describing trauma on the war front or typhoid among tourists, clinicians everywhere will identify with his stories. Both the layperson and the clinician will be captivated by the author's prose, and in the end both might find themselves thinking, "Why haven't I tried something like that?"

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Don't Get Sick—The Hidden Dangers of Camping and Hiking

Buck Tilton and Rick Bennett

Seattle, WA: The Mountaineer Books, 2002

US \$8.95, 108 pages, softcover

For its small size and price, this book does a nice job laying out the basics of reducing one's chances of contracting an infectious disease during forays into the outdoors. When I picked up the book and noted that the opening discussion started with the heading "What are germs?" I grimaced, fearing that I was in for a long read. I was pleasantly surprised, however, to learn that the authors rapidly progress from such basics to lay out practical information regarding disease prevention for the wilderness traveler. As stated in the introduction, "The goal of this book is to provide the knowledge—some science tempered with common sense—that will make your wilderness trips as totally healthy as possible."

The authors, both emergency medical technicians with appropriate wilderness experience, use short, hypothetical scenarios to introduce discussions on topics such as personal hygiene in the wilderness, water disinfection, food management, waste disposal, and zoonoses. Diseases caused by viruses, bacteria, fungi and yeast, and protozoa are covered. The authors liberally use tables and figures to expand on the information presented. Some of the tables could have been improved with slightly more detail. As an example, their table on food-borne diseases includes the responsible organisms, typical foods involved, principal symptoms, and latency period but fails to include information on the expected duration of illness. The selected references listed at the end of the book draw heavily on other, more detailed texts in the wilderness genre, many of which are likely already in the libraries of more experienced wilderness medicine practitioners.

The authors' colloquial writing style makes the book an easy, entertaining read, and for the price, this book would make a welcome addition to the library of anyone with an interest in staying well in the woods.

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