Medical Toxicology: A Synopsis and Study Guide

Seth Schonwald

Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, 2001
US \$99.95, 893 pages, softcover

In its preface, this book purports to update, summarize, and edit Ellenhorn's *Medical Toxicology* text, which has been a primary medical toxicology reference for several years. At a svelte 862 pages of text, this paperback does an excellent job of providing the pertinent facts on a wide array of toxins, both natural and manufactured. However, it is not, nor should it be expected to be, a replacement for the 2000+ page tome it is based upon.

The text crosses international borders with antidotes used in other countries and provides their trade names for easy reference. All the usual topical areas as well as intoxication with veterinary medications are included. A particular strength of the text is its inclusion of well-known complications and reactions to be expected from the use of antidotes (eg, expecting fever on the second and third dose of dimercaprol treatment in children). Intrachapter questions test knowledge and comprehension of sections and provide instant feedback on areas needing further review, and nice examples calculating drug concentrations and predicting blood levels after ingestions are given using pharmacokinetic formulas.

The food toxicology section, with several pages devoted to food-borne bacterial and parasitic pathogens, although excellent and of interest to those with a wilderness medicine bent, seems more suited to a microbiology text than to a toxicology text.

Of special interest for *Wilderness Environ Med* readers, Part V Natural Toxins has chapters covering reptiles, amphibians, marine toxicology, mammals, arthropods, herbal medicines, volatile oils, plant dermatitis, beans, houseplants, food plants, wild plants, mushrooms, and mycotoxins. Although many items are covered, the discussion is brief at best and irrelevant at worst. There are no charts, graphs, illustrations, or pictures of any kind, thereby making the book tiring to the eye and a challenge to continue reading.

This book would be recommended for someone wanting a no-frills review and self-assessment of medical toxicology. It is not a reference text.

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Bear Attacks: Their Causes and Avoidance, revised edition

Stephen Herrero

Guilford, CT: The Lyons Press, 2002

(original edition 1985)

US \$16.95, 282 pages, softcover

Bear Attacks: Their Causes and Avoidance is the ultimate reference book on North American brown and black bears. Unlike any other book on the market about bear attacks (and there are many!), this text is based on science rather than sensational accounts and folklore. If you are looking to be scared out of your sleeping bag and deluged with gory details of bear attacks, read one of the other books. But if you want to learn about bears, why they act as they do, and how humans should behave in the wilderness, then this book is not only worth reading, but it is very likely to give you the tools you need to save your life in a bear encounter.

Herrero's mission, which he achieves grandly, is to empower people to decrease the likelihood of encounters with bears by teaching bear biology and ecology—not only to protect people but to conserve bears. The author's lifelong experience, both personal and professional, gives him unparalleled expertise in the behavior of bears, and many of the studies he references are from his own original research as Professor of Biology at the University of Calgary. He teaches us how to recognize bears (different types of bears have vastly different responses to the same situation), where bears are likely to be (based on season of year and foods available), and how to recognize if a bear has been nearby (and how recently). Because of his years of research and interviews of bear-attack victims, he has compiled a very useful and reproducible set of suggestions for people who encounter a wild bear. From how to best avoid an encounter to how to behave when under attack by a bear, Herrero's observations have educated thousands and surely have saved many lives.

The text has plenty of maps, line drawings, and photographs (all black and white) to illustrate everything from the range of the grizzly bear to the differences between black and brown bear tracks to the posture one should assume in case of attack. It is disappointing that many of the photos and drawings are fuzzy or overexposed, obviously rephotographed from the original text. In many cases, the quality of the art or photo is much clearer and of better quality in the 1985 edition. Shame on the publisher for cutting corners and for advertising this revised edition as "thoroughly revised and updated." Aside from the new introduction and the addition of a discussion on cayenne pepper spray, trail design, and perimeter monitoring systems, most of the text is