Book Reviews

Improvised Medicine: Providing Care in Extreme Environments

Kenneth V. Iserson

1st Edition, New York, NY

McGraw-Hill Professional, 2012

US \$56.00, 578 pages, paperback

At first glance, *Improvised Medicine* made me think of David Werner's *Where There Is No Doctor*. I began this review nostalgic of a stint in Honduras with that very book in mind. Dr Iserson takes his book a few steps further, however. He handily provides a manual that will augment any healthcare provider's choice of reference materials, whether it be for a natural disaster or an area with few resources. As I perused the contents I envisioned myself in situations such as Katrina, Indonesia, Haiti, Japan, or the Philippines.

While difficult to read from cover to cover, I don't think that's the point. Rather, I found it more educational to pick through chapters using the well-configured table of contents, cross-referencing the thorough index to discover this book's breadth. Besides informing the reader how to "MacGyver" a cool device like an esophageal stethoscope, Iserson demonstrates how-to principles of setting up a hospital, triaging patients, and communication essentials, and finally how to manage the deceased. This handbook leaves few, if any, bases uncovered.

Replete with well-placed tables, charts, and diagrams, the reader need not memorize much. Iserson provides the grateful reader easy access to essential metrics such as estimating blood loss volumes, vital sign changes, and measurement conversions. He also covers a variety of physical examination skills and practice techniques, including a section on blood transfusion practices. Although there are many topics I thought unlikely to actually need, Iserson cleverly includes some background into the history and reasons for such practices. If you are looking to volunteer in the next natural disaster, Dr Iserson's book is a must-have. Even if you only actually use a third of what he covers, this review is worthwhile.

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Everest: The First Ascent. How a Champion of Science Helped to Conquer the Mountain

Harriet Tuckey

Guilford, CT; Lyons Press: 2013

402 pages

Sometimes, one knows within a few pages whether a book is a winner. This describes Harriet Tuckey's 2013 book and project of 9 years. The secondary title is the most interesting, *How a Champion of Science Helped to Conquer the Mountain*. That champion was Griffith Pugh.

British explorer-writer H. W. Tilman once bemoaned the uneasy alliance between climbing mountains for their own sake versus scientific purpose. Such sentiment was a hindrance for Pugh in Britain. Tuckey's book covers the 2 equally important themes of personalities versus Pugh's physiological experiments from sea level to the Himalayas on soldiers, athletes, mountaineers, and others exposed to various environments. On Everest, his recommendations for hydration, nutrition, metabolism, boots, stoves, acclimatization, oxygen, and more were instrumental in the eventual outcome. However, the honorary Sir titles of John Hunt and Edmund Hillary were not earned by their treatment of Pugh. Both ignored, ostracized, and usurped his contributions.

On page 1, Dr Michael Ward is introduced to Dr Griffith Pugh, found sitting chalk-white and cold, immersed in icewater, experimenting upon himself. He was often difficult for family and some colleagues to live with, an eccentric, a single-minded and absent-minded scientist, a boffin but with a more negative slant. Harriet Tuckey, his daughter, and much of the world, did not know of his creativity until years later. Respect was belatedly given him at the 40th anniversary of the 1953 first ascent of Everest. Loyal colleague Ward honored Pugh, surprising the audience with the "news" that while previous expeditions had leaders, had logistics, had climbers, they had failed because they did not have the unsung hero Griffith Pugh constantly studying and improving gear and knowledge. He had thus converted what had previously been amateur outings into a scientifically improved attempt and success.

Many of *Wilderness & Environmental Medicine's* readers are aware of Pugh's famous studies on Cho