

# Toxicology Handbook

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\*1st edn, xi + 468 pp, paperback with illustrations, ISBN 13: 978-0-7295-3789-6. Sydney, Churchill Livingstone (Imprint of Elsevier), RRP: \$69.95, 2007.

The Hazardous Substance Data Bank of the National Library of Medicine in the United States contains information on more than 5000 hazardous chemicals.<sup>1</sup> In 2004, there were over 700 deaths due to accidental poisoning and exposure to noxious substances in Australia.<sup>2</sup> Clinicians are confronted with a formidable task in evaluating and resuscitating poisoned patients daily, sometimes under life-threatening circumstances. The availability today of a number of toxicology reference publications has assisted greatly; however there is now also a book published by Australian physicians. The 1st edition of the *Toxicology Handbook* is this reference and one which will no doubt establish itself as one of the leading reference manuals in Australasia in the field of toxicology.

The *Toxicology Handbook* is presented as a 468-page A5 publication that would fit easily into the briefcase or carry bag. In addition to the “no nonsense”, three-color, semi-glossy cover, the contents of the *Toxicology Handbook* continue this theme. It also contains a table of Contents, a Foreword by Professor George A Jelinek, a Preface, a list of Authors, a list of Contributors, six chapters, 152 sections, seven Appendices, and a comprehensive Index. There is no bibliography, glossary, acknowledgments or list of abbreviations.

The primary target audience of the *Toxicology Handbook* is stated to be “all emergency medicine staff”, presumably in Australasia. It would also be a useful resource for paramedics, pharmacists and general practitioners, but a core reference for any agency to which poisoning referrals are made by telephone or electronically. This book would also be a useful educational aid for residents, medical trainees and postgraduate students, especially those new to the area of toxicology.

The Chapters include “Chapter 1: Approach to the poisoned patient”; “Chapter 2: Specific considerations”; “Chapter 3: Specific Toxins”; “Chapter 4: Antidotes”; “Chapter 5: Envenomings”; and “Chapter 6: Antivenoms”. By far the largest section at 206 pages is “Chapter 3”, which discusses

70 toxins from Alcohol to Warfarin. The description of the toxins includes very useful “handy tips”, “Pitfalls”, and “Controversies”. The inclusion of Envenomings and Antivenoms is very useful from the Australian perspective, but obviously does not include discussion of envenomings from further afield, which could be considered a limitation of these sections. There are seven Appendices titled “Poisonings Information Telephone Numbers”, “Example ECGs”, “Drug Concentrations and Conversion Charts”, “Alcohol Pathways”, “Nomograms”, “Therapeutic Over-warfarinisation”, and “Management of Allergic Reactions to Antivenoms”.

Details of the four authors are given on the back cover as well as on page xi and they are well known in Australasia. Lindsay Murray is Consultant Emergency Physician and Clinical Toxicologist, Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, Perth Australia. Frank Daly is Director of Emergency Department and Consultant Clinical Toxicologist, Royal Perth Hospital, Perth, Australia. Mark Little is Consultant Emergency Physician and Clinical Toxicologist, Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital, Perth, Australia. Mike Cadogan is Consultant Emergency Physician, Sir Charles Gairdner Emergency Department, Perth, Australia. There is an annoying typographical error in the qualifications of the third author, repeated in both locations and some inconsistencies in the presentation of place of graduation for degree qualifications.

The consistent and concise style ensures that the *Toxicology Handbook* is easy to read. Given that this is only the first edition of the *Toxicology Handbook*, it is a remarkably mature reference manual, which is a credit to the authors and contributors. The *Toxicology Handbook* has little competition nationally and only some competition internationally. Some examples of other international handbooks of toxicology have been reviewed elsewhere.<sup>3,4</sup> *Toxicology Handbook* will certainly appeal to emergency medical staff in Australasia, particularly those who do not already use a similar guide or those who wish to include a local work in their reference portfolio. The cost is

not prohibitive for clinicians and other health staff, and the *Toxicology Handbook* is sure to become an important addition to the exclusive international portfolio of standard manuals and textbooks in the area of toxicology.

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*Reviewed by:*

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### References

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4. Derelanko MJ, Hollinger MA. *Handbook of Toxicology* 2nd edn. CRC Press, 2001 (Reviewed: *Toxicologic Pathol* 2002; 30: 534).