

Cambridge University Press
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J. F. Cade
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To Tom, Jacqueline and John, to whom writing a book should mean weaving a tale of high adventure rather than constructing a catalogue of boring nostrums. Paternal apologies for the disappointment, but perhaps next time . . .

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UNCOMMON PROBLEMS IN INTENSIVE CARE

J.F. Cade MD, PhD, FRACP, FANZCA, FFICANZCA, FCCP

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LONDON • SAN FRANCISCO

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© 2002

Greenwich Medical Media Limited
137 Euston Road
London
NW1 2AA

ISBN 184 1100919

First published 2002

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Distributed worldwide by Plymbridge Distributors Ltd
Typeset by Servis Filmsetting Ltd, Manchester, England
Printed by MPG Books Ltd, Bodmin, Cornwall, UK

Contents

A

- Abciximab 1
- Abortion 1
- Acanthosis nigricans 1
- Acetazolamide 1
- Acetylsalicylic acid 1
- Achlorhydria 1
- Acidosis, renal tubular 2
- Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome 2
- Acromegaly 3
- ACTH 4
- Actinomycosis 4
- Acute brain syndrome 4
- Acute fatty liver of pregnancy 4
- Acute lung irritation 5
- Acute pulmonary oedema 5
- Acute respiratory distress syndrome 7
- Acyclovir 7
- Addison's disease 8
- Adenosine 8
- Adrenal insufficiency 9
- Adrenocorticotrophic hormone 10
- Adult respiratory distress syndrome 11
- Agammaglobulinaemia 11
- Agranulocytosis 11
- AIDS 11
- Air embolism 11
- Alcohol, methyl 11
- Aldosterone 11
- Alkaloids 12
- Allergic bronchopulmonary aspergillosis 12
- Allergic granulomatosis and angiitis 12
- Alopecia 12
- Alpha-fetoprotein 13
- Alpha₁-antitrypsin deficiency 13
- Altitude 14
- Aluminium 14
- Alveolar hypoventilation 16
- Alzheimer's disease 16
- Amanita 16
- Amenorrhoea 16
- Aminoaciduria 16
- Aminocaproic acid 16
- Ammonia 16
- Amnesia 16
- Amniotic fluid embolism 17
- Amoebiasis 17
- Amphetamines 18
- Amyloid 20
- Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis 20
- Anaemia 20
- Anaphylaxis 24
- ANCA 24
- Aneurysms, mycotic 24
- Angiodysplasia 24
- Angioedema 24
- Angiotensin 24
- Angiotensin-converting enzyme 25
- Animal bites 25
- Ankylosing spondylitis 25
- Anorectal infections 27
- Anorectic agents 27
- Anorexia nervosa 27
- Anthrax 27
- Antibiotic-associated colitis 28
- Anticardiolipin antibody 28
- Anticholinergic (cholinolytic) agents 28
- Anticholinesterases 29
- Antidiuretic hormone 30
- Antinuclear antibodies 30
- Antiphospholipid syndrome 30
- Antiprotease 32
- Antithrombin III 32
- Aortic coarctation 33
- Aortic dissection 33
- Aplastic anaemia 34
- ARDS 34
- Arnold-Chiari malformation 34

Uncommon Problems in Intensive Care

- Arsenic 35
 Arteriovenous malformations 36
 Arteritis 37
 Arthritis 38
 Arthropathies 39
 Arthus reaction 39
 Asbestos 39
 Aspergillosis 40
 Aspiration 41
 Aspirin 41
 Asthma 42
 Asthmatic pulmonary eosinophilia 44
 Atrial natriuretic factor 44
 Autacoids 44
 Auto-erythrocyte purpura 44
 Autoimmune disorders 44
- B
- Bacillary angiomatosis 46
 Bacillary peliosis hepatis 46
 Bacitracin 46
 BAL 46
 Barotrauma 46
 Basophilia 46
 Bat bites 47
 Bathing 47
 Bed rest 47
 Bee stings 47
 Behçet's syndrome 47
 Bell's palsy 48
 Bence Jones protein 49
 Benign intracranial hypertension 49
 Beriberi 49
 Beryllium 50
 Beta₂-microglobulin 50
 Biliary cirrhosis 50
 Bioterrorism 51
 Bird fancier's lung 51
 Bismuth 51
 Bites and stings 51
 Bleomycin 56
 Blisters 56
 Boerhaave's syndrome 56
 Botulism 56
 Bovine spongiform encephalopathy 57
 Bromocriptine 57
 Bronchiectasis 57
 Bronchiolitis obliterans 58
- Bronchocentric granulomatosis 58
 Brucellosis 58
 Budd–Chiari syndrome 59
 Bullae 59
 Burns, respiratory complications 59
 Byssinosis 61
- C
- Cadmium 62
 Calcitonin 62
 Calcium 63
 Calcium disodium edetate 63
 Cancer 63
 Cancer complications 64
 Carbon monoxide 65
 Carbon tetrachloride 66
 Carbonic anhydrase inhibitors 67
 Carboxyhaemoglobin 67
 Carcinoembryonic antigen 68
 Carcinoid syndrome 68
 Cardiac tumours 69
 Cardiomyopathies 70
 Cardiovascular diseases 73
 Cat bites 74
 Cat-scratch disease 74
 Cavitation 76
 Cellulitis 77
 Central pontine myelinolysis 77
 Cerebellar degeneration 78
 Cerebral arterial gas embolism 78
 Cerebral arteritis 78
 Charcot–Marie–Tooth disease 78
 Chelating agents 78
 Chemical poisoning 81
 Chest wall disorders 82
 Chinese restaurant syndrome 82
 Chlorine 82
 Cholangitis 83
 Cholera 83
 Cholestasis 84
 Cholinergic agonists 84
 Cholinergic crisis 85
 Christmas disease 85
 Chromium 85
 Chronic fatigue syndrome 85
 Churg–Strauss syndrome 85
 Chylothorax 86
 Ciguatera 86

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p> Clostridial infections 87
 Clostridium difficile 88
 Coagulation disorders 88
 Cocaine 89
 Cold 90
 Cold agglutinin disease 90
 Colitis 90
 Complement deficiency 91
 Conjunctivitis 92
 Conn's syndrome 93
 Copper 94
 Costochondritis 94
 CREST syndrome 95
 Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease 95
 Cricoarytenoid arthritis 96
 Critical illness myopathy 96
 Critical illness polyneuropathy 96
 Crohn's disease 96
 Cryoglobulinaemia 97
 Cryptococcosis 97
 Cushing's syndrome 97
 Cyanide 99
 Cystic fibrosis 100
 Cytomegalovirus 101

 D
 Dantrolene 103
 Decompression sickness 103
 Delirium 103
 Dementia 103
 Demyelinating diseases 104
 Dengue 105
 Dermatitis 105
 Dermatology 106
 Dermatomyositis 107
 Desferrioxamine 107
 Desmopressin 107
 Diaphragm 108
 Diarrhoea 108
 Diffuse fibrosing alveolitis 110
 Digoxin-specific antibody 112
 Dimercaprol 113
 Dioxins 113
 Diphtheria 113
 Dissecting aneurysm 114
 Disseminated intravascular
 coagulation 114
 Diving 114 </p> | <p> Dog bites 115
 Drowning 115
 Drug allergy 117
 Drug fever 118
 Drug-drug interactions 118
 Drugs 119
 Drugs and the kidney 121
 Drugs and the lung 122
 Dysentery 124
 Dysphagia 124
 Dysproteinaemias 124

 E
 Eaton Lambert syndrome 125
 Ebola haemorrhagic fever 125
 Echinacea 125
 Echinococcosis 125
 Ecstasy 126
 Ecthyma 126
 Ectopic hormone production 126
 EDTA 126
 Eisenmenger syndrome 126
 Embolism, air 127
 Emphysema 127
 Empyema 127
 Encephalitis 127
 Encephalopathy 127
 Endarteritis 128
 Endocarditis 128
 Endocrinology 131
 Enterocolitis 133
 Enteropathogenic <i>E. coli</i> 133
 Envenomation 133
 Environment 133
 Eosinopenia 133
 Eosinophilia 134
 Eosinophilia and lung infiltration 134
 Eosinophilic granuloma 136
 Eosinophilic pneumonia 136
 Epidermolysis bullosa 136
 Epididymitis 136
 Epidural abscess 136
 Epstein-Barr virus 137
 Ergot 138
 Erysipelas 138
 Erythema marginatum 138
 Erythema migrans 139
 Erythema multiforme 139 </p> |
|--|---|

Uncommon Problems in Intensive Care

Erythema nodosum 139
 Erythrocytosis 139
 Erythromelalgia 139
 Ethylene glycol 140
 Euthyroid sick syndrome 141
 Exfoliative dermatitis 142
 Exophthalmos 143
 Exotic pneumonia 143
 Extrinsic allergic alveolitis 143

F

Factitious disorders 144
 Familial hypocalciuric hypercalcaemia 144
 Fanconi's syndrome 144
 Farmer's lung 144
 Fasciitis 144
 Felty's syndrome 144
 Fetal haemoglobin 145
 Fever 145
 Fever of unknown origin 145
 Fibrinolysis 145
 Fish envenomation 146
 Flushing 146
 Folic acid deficiency 147
 Folliculitis 147
 Food poisoning 147
 Formaldehyde 148
 Fournier's gangrene 148
 Friedreich's ataxia 148
 Frostbite 148
 Furunculosis 149

G

Gamma-hydroxybutyric acid 150
 Ganciclovir 150
 Gangrene 150
 Gas gangrene 151
 Gas in soft tissues 152
 Gastric emptying 152
 Gastrinoma 152
 Gastroenteritis 152
 Gastroenterology 152
 Germ warfare 153
 Giant cell arteritis 153
 Gingivitis 153
 Glomerular disease 153
 Glossitis 154
 Glucagonoma 154

Glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase deficiency 155
 Glycogen storage diseases 156
 Goodpasture's syndrome 156
 Gout 157
 Graves' disease 158
 Growth hormone 158
 Guillain-Barré syndrome 158

H

Haemangioma 159
 Haematology 159
 Haematuria 161
 Haemochromatosis 161
 Haemodilution 163
 Haemoglobin disorders 163
 Haemoglobinopathy 165
 Haemogloninuria 165
 Haemolysis 165
 Haemolytic-uraemic syndromes 165
 Haemophilia 167
 Haemoptysis 167
 Haemostasis 168
 Hamman-Rich syndrome 168
 Hand-Schüller-Christian disease 168
 Hantavirus 168
 Heat 168
 Heat cramps 169
 Heat exhaustion 169
 Heat rash 169
 Heat shock proteins 169
 Heat stroke 170
 Heavy chains 171
 Heavy metal poisoning 171
 HELLP syndrome 171
 Hemianopia 172
 Henoch-Schonlein purpura 172
 Heparin 172
 Hepatic diseases 173
 Hepatic necrosis 174
 Hepatic vein thrombosis 174
 Hepatitis 174
 Hepatocellular carcinoma 177
 Hepatoma 177
 Hepatopulmonary syndrome 178
 Hereditary haemorrhagic telangiectasia 179
 Herpesviruses 179
 High altitude 179

- Hirsutism 181
 Histiocytosis X 181
 Histocompatibility complex 182
 Histoplasmosis 183
 Horner's syndrome 183
 Hot tubs 184
 Human bites 184
 Hydatid disease 184
 Hydrocephalus 184
 Hydrogen sulfide 184
 Hyperbaric oxygen 184
 Hypercalcaemia 184
 Hyperparathyroidism 186
 Hyperphosphataemia 188
 Hypersensitivity pneumonitis 188
 Hypersplenism 189
 Hyperthermia 189
 Hyperthyroidism 189
 Hypertrichosis 191
 Hyperuricaemia 191
 Hyperviscosity 191
 Hypocalcaemia 191
 Hypoglycaemia 192
 Hypokalaemia 192
 Hyponatraemia 192
 Hypoparathyroidism 192
 Hypophosphataemia 193
 Hypothermia 194
 Hypothyroidism 195
- I
- Idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis 197
 Idiopathic pulmonary haemosiderosis 197
 Idiopathic thrombocytopenic purpura 197
 Immotile cilia syndrome 197
 Immune complex disease 197
 Immunodeficiency 199
 Immunology 200
 Infections 201
 Inflammatory bowel disease 203
 Inhalation injury 205
 Insect bites and stings 205
 Interstitial lung disease 205
 Interstitial nephritis 206
 Interstitial pneumonitis 206
 Iron 206
 Iron overload disease 207
- Irritable bowel syndrome 207
 Islet cell tumour 207
- J
- Jarisch–Herxheimer reaction 209
 Jellyfish envenomation 209
- K
- Kaposi's sarcoma 210
 Kartagener's syndrome 210
 Korsakoff syndrome 210
 Kyphoscoliosis 210
- L
- Lactase Deficiency 211
 Lactic acidosis 211
 Lassa fever 212
 Lateral medullary syndrome 213
 Lead 213
 Leptospirosis 214
 Leukocytoclastic vasculitis 214
 Leukoencephalopathy 214
 Lewisite 214
 Lice 215
 Light chains 215
 Lightning 215
 Liquorice 215
 Listeriosis 216
 Lithium 216
 Livedo reticularis 218
 Liver abscess 218
 Loeffler's syndrome 219
 Lung tumours 219
 Lupus anticoagulant 220
 Lyme disease 220
 Lymphadenopathy 221
 Lymphocytosis 221
 Lymphomatoid granulomatosis 222
 Lymphopenia 222
 Lyssavirus 222
- M
- Magnesium 223
 Malabsorption 224
 Malaria 225
 Malignant hyperthermia 226
 Mallory–Weiss syndrome 227
 Manganese 227

Uncommon Problems in Intensive Care

- Marfan's syndrome 228
 Marine vertebrate and invertebrate stings 228
 Mast cells 228
 Mastocytosis 228
 Mediastinal diseases 228
 Mediastinitis 230
 Mediterranean fever 230
 Medullary sponge kidney 230
 Medullary thyroid cancer 230
 Megaloblastic anaemia 230
 Melatonin 231
 Meleney's progressive synergistic gangrene 231
 Melioidosis 231
 Mendelson's syndrome 232
 Meningococcaemia 232
 Meningoencephalitis 232
 Mercury 232
 Mesothelioma 233
 Metabolic acidosis 233
 Metabolism and nutrition 233
 Methaemoglobinaemia 234
 Methanol 235
 Methylene blue 236
 Microangiopathic haemolysis 237
 Miller Fisher syndrome 237
 Mites 237
 Mixed connective tissue disease 237
 Monkey bites 238
 Monosodium glutamate 238
 Motor neurone disease 238
 Mouth diseases 238
 Multifocal motor neuropathy 240
 Multiple endocrine neoplasia 240
 Multiple myeloma 241
 Multiple sclerosis 243
 Muscular dystrophies 244
 Mushroom poisoning 245
 Mustards 246
 Myasthenia gravis 246
 Mycetism 248
 Mycetoma 248
 Mycoplasma hominis 248
 Mycoplasma pneumoniae 248
 Mycotic aneurysms 248
 Myelitis 248
 Myelopathy 248
 Myoglobinuria 248
 Myopathy 248
 Myositis 249
 Myotonia 250
 Myxoedema 250
 Myxoma 250
- N
- Nails 251
 Necrolytic migratory erythema 251
 Necrotizing cutaneous mucormycosis 251
 Necrotizing pneumonia 251
 Nephrolithiasis 251
 Nephrology 252
 Nephrotic syndrome 254
 Neural tube defects 254
 Neurofibromatosis 254
 Neuroleptic malignant syndrome 254
 Neurology 255
 Neuropathy 257
 Neutropenia 261
 Neutrophilia 262
 Non-respiratory thoracic disorders 263
 Norwalk virus 263
 Nutrition 263
- O
- Obstetrics and gynaecology 264
 Occupational lung diseases 265
 Octreotide 267
 Oncofetal antigen 267
 Ophthalmoplegia 267
 Optic neuritis 267
 Orchitis 267
 Organophosphates 267
 Osler-Weber-Rendu disease 267
 Ovarian hyperstimulation syndrome 267
 Oxytocin 268
- P
- Paget's disease 269
 Palmar erythema 270
 Pancreatitis 270
 Pancytopenia 270
 Papilloedema 271
 Paragonimiasis 271
 Paraneoplastic syndromes 271
 Paraquat 273

Parotitis 274	Procalcitonin 297
Paroxysmal nocturnal haemoglobinuria 274	Proctitis 297
Pediculosis 274	Progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy 298
Pelvic inflammatory disease 274	Protein C 298
Pemphigus 274	Protein S 299
Penicillamine 275	Proteinuria 299
Periodic breathing 275	Prussian blue 300
Periodic paralysis 275	Pseudogout 300
Pernicious anaemia 275	Pseudohyperkalaemia 300
Peroneal muscular atrophy 275	Pseudohyponatraemia 300
Petechiae 275	Pseudohypoparathyroidism 301
Peutz–Jeghers syndrome 276	Pseudomembranous colitis 301
Phaeochromocytoma 276	Pseudo-obstruction of the colon 301
Phosgene 277	Pseudo primary aldosteronism 301
Phrenic nerve 277	Psoriasis 301
Phthiriasis 277	Ptosis 302
Physical exposure 277	Pulmonary alveolar proteinosis 302
Pigmentation disorders 277	Pulmonary hypertension 303
Pituitary 278	Pulmonary infiltrates 305
Pituitary apoplexy 279	Pulmonary infiltration with eosinophilia 306
Placental abruption 279	Pulmonary nodules 306
Plasmacytoma 279	Pulmonary oedema 307
Plasminogen 279	Pulmonary veno-occlusive disease 307
Platelet function defects 279	Purpura 307
Pleural cavity 280	Pyoderma gangrenosum 308
Plumbism 284	Pyrexia 308
Plummer–Vinson syndrome 284	Pyroglutamic acid 313
Pneumatosis coli 284	
Pneumoconiosis 284	Q
Pneumomediastinum 284	Q Fever 313
Pneumonia, exotic 284	
Pneumonia in pregnancy 284	R
Pneumothorax 285	Rabies 314
Poisoning 285	Radiation injury 314
Poliomyelitis 286	Rat bites 315
Polyarteritis nodosa 286	Raynaud's phenomenon/disease 315
Polycystic kidney disease 286	Reactive arthritis 316
Polycystic ovary syndrome 287	Reiter's syndrome 316
Polycythaemia 287	Relapsing fever 317
Polymyalgia rheumatica 288	Renal artery occlusion 317
Polymyositis/dermatomyositis 288	Renal calculous disease 318
Polyneuritis 289	Renal cortical necrosis 318
Polyneuropathy 289	Renal cystic disease 319
Porphyria 289	Renal tubular acidosis 320
Post-transfusion purpura 292	Renal vein thrombosis 321
Pre-eclampsia 292	Renin–angiotensin–aldosterone 321
Pregnancy 294	Respiratory burns 322
Priapism 297	

Uncommon Problems in Intensive Care

Respiratory diseases 322
 Restless legs 324
 Reticulocytes 324
 Retinal haemorrhage 325
 Retrobulbar neuritis 325
 Reye's syndrome 325
 Rhabdomyolysis 326
 Rheumatology 327
 Rickettsial diseases 328

S

Salicylism 330
 Salpingitis 330
 Sarcoidosis 330
 Scalded skin syndrome 333
 Scarlet fever 333
 Schistosomiasis 333
 Schonlein–Henoch purpura 334
 Scleroderma 334
 Scombroid 335
 Scorpion stings 336
 Scurvy 336
 Selenium 336
 Serotonin syndrome 337
 Serpents 337
 Serum sickness 337
 Sheehan's syndrome 337
 Short bowel syndrome 337
 Shy–Drager disease 337
 Sick cell anaemia 337
 Sideroblastic anaemia 337
 Situs inversus 337
 Sjögren's syndrome 338
 Skin necrosis 339
 Skin signs of internal malignant disease 339
 Sleep disorders of breathing 339
 Smoke inhalation 341
 Snake bites 341
 Sodium nitroprusside 341
 Somatomedin C 341
 Somatostatin 341
 Spider bites 341
 Splenomegaly 341
 Spondyloarthritis 342
 Spotted fevers 342
 Staphylococcal scalded skin syndrome 342
 Stevens–Johnson syndrome 342
 Stings 342

Stomatitis 342
 Storage disorders 343
 Stridor 343
 Strychnine 343
 Sturge–Weber syndrome 343
 Sucralfate 344
 Sweating 344
 Sweet's syndrome 345
 Swimming 345
 Syndrome of inappropriate antidiuretic hormone 345
 Syphilis 346
 Syringomyelia 347
 Systemic diseases and the lung 347
 Systemic lupus erythematosus 348

T

Takayasu's disease 351
 Tardive dyskinesia 351
 Temporal arteritis 351
 Tetanus 351
 Tetrahydroaminoacridine (THA) 352
 Tetralogy of Fallot 352
 Tetrodotoxin 352
 Thalassaemia 352
 Thallium 353
 Thermoregulation 353
 Thiamine deficiency 353
 Thrombasthenia 353
 Thrombocythaemia 353
 Thrombocytopenia 353
 Thrombocytosis/thrombocythaemia 357
 Thromboembolism 358
 Thrombophilia 358
 Thrombopoietin 359
 Thrombotic thrombocytopenic purpura 359
 Thyroid function 359
 Thyroid storm 359
 Ticks 359
 Tinnitus 359
 Tongue 359
 Torulosis 359
 Toxic epidermal necrolysis 359
 Toxic erythemas 359
 Toxic gases and fumes 359
 Toxic-shock syndrome 359
 Toxoplasmosis 361
 Trace elements 361

Transverse myelitis 362	Vitamin K deficiency 374
Trauma 362	Vitiligo 374
Trauma in pregnancy 363	Von Recklinghausen's disease 374
Trench fever 364	Von Willebrand's disease 374
Trichlorethylene 364	
Tropical eosinophilia 364	W
Tuberculosis 364	Waldenstrom's macroglobulinaemia 376
Tuberous sclerosis 365	Warfare agents 376
Tubulointerstitial diseases 365	Wasp stings 377
Tumour lysis syndrome 367	Water-related accidents 377
Typhoid fever 367	Waterhouse–Friderichsen syndrome 377
Typhus 367	WDHA syndrome 377
	Weil's disease 377
U	Wegener's granulomatosis 377
Ulcerative colitis 368	Wernicke–Korsakoff syndrome 379
Ulcers 368	Whipple's disease 379
Urticaria 368	Wilson's disease 379
	Woolsorter's disease 379
V	
Varicella 370	Y
Vasculitis 370	Yellow fever 380
Vasopressin 372	
Vertigo 372	Z
Vesiculobullous diseases 372	Zinc 381
VIPoma 373	Zollinger–Ellison syndrome 381
Viral haemorrhagic fever 373	Zoonoses 381
Vitamin deficiency 373	Zoster 381
Vitamin B ₁₂ deficiency 373	

Preface

This book is intended to be different, though whether it is in fact so and more importantly how usefully so is a matter for the reader to judge. For though there are many Intensive Care books, their general theme regardless of their size is always one of coverage of the major topics, or groups of specialized topics, encountered most commonly in the field. Usually, and appropriately, emergency management is emphasized, sometimes even in the form of a didactic recipe.

Yet topics related to the care of the seriously ill, probably like those in most other areas, fall into three categories – the common, the uncommon and the incidental. Common problems should not need to be looked up in a textbook by those in the field, except perhaps by the most junior. Rather, the most useful references are journals and monographs reporting new information. Incidental problems are those not relevant to the current Intensive Care diagnosis and management of a particular patient. For the curious, suitable information can readily be sought as a rule in appropriate general or specialist texts. Uncommon problems are another matter. Even experienced clinicians cannot retain in their memory all the relevant details of so many varied topics, yet these problems may have a direct impact on acute patient care. Some, of course, do not carry any major or immediate therapeutic implication, though knowledge is always desirable, especially if readily obtainable. Some can be buried or overlooked in even a major Intensive Care textbook. Most can be found sooner or later in a major current textbook or journal for the relevant specialty, but then the impact on

Intensive Care management is unlikely to be made apparent.

A solution for most clinicians and departments has generally been to collect or perhaps to have on-line, a bank of suitable references from the literature, but this can be a tedious task, may not be comprehensive and is often inefficient in data retrieval.

This book offers another approach. Uncommon problems relevant to Intensive Care have been gathered into a single volume, in which they have been described in sufficient detail to obviate much of the need to refer to specialized texts. Moreover, their implications for Intensive Care management have been highlighted. Although many of these problems can be reviewed in a more leisurely way than the more common and pressing disorders in Intensive Care, it could be convenient to have them collated in a single volume. The individual topics have been arranged alphabetically, as in an encyclopaedia and with ample cross-referencing, so that no index is required. The book is thus intended to provide an easy and practical reference for the clinician at any level faced with an uncommon clinical problem at the bedside.

There are many things this book is not intended to do. It does not replace major specialized Intensive Care texts, for it is not designed to cover the front-line disorders and emergencies which are the 'bread-and-butter' of the care of the seriously ill. Nor does it replace in-depth specialist reviews and more importantly consultant opinion of specialist colleagues – rather it is hoped to be a partner with these in the large and important boundary between

Uncommon Problems in Intensive Care

Intensive Care and many other medical and surgical specialties. Some may say that such a volume would need to be enormous to be truly useful and that a more modest-sized text may do justice to nothing. A few may believe that Intensive Care is primarily about managing the general principles of disordered physiology and that diagnosis except for the most obvious can be made by others if necessary. A greater difficulty lies in where to draw the line in breadth and in depth of coverage. In this, comments and suggestions would of course be welcome.

The following colleagues from the Royal Melbourne Hospital and the University of Melbourne have kindly made expert comments on the topics in their own areas of specialist knowledge – Dr David Baraclough (rheumatology), Prof. Graham Brown (infectious diseases), Dr Peter Colman (metabolism & nutrition, endocrinology), Prof. Stephen Davis (neurology), Dr David Hunt (cardiovascular diseases), Dr Benno Ihle (metabolism & nutrition, obstetrics &

gynaecology, nephrology), Dr Tom Kay (immunology), Dr Peter Morley (drugs, environment, trauma), Prof. Rob Moulds (drugs, poisoning), Dr Jeff Presneill (respiratory diseases, miscellaneous diseases), Prof. Michael Quinn (obstetrics & gynaecology), Prof. James St John (gastroenterology, hepatic diseases) and Dr George Varigos (dermatology). Their assistance is gratefully acknowledged, though the entire content including any errors remains the responsibility of the author.

The author was fortunate to be able to persuade Mr Ron Tandberg, Australia's leading political cartoonist, to illustrate the book. His incisive wit is expected to enliven and illuminate an otherwise perhaps tedious text, but it is hoped that his contribution does not become the book's main attraction!

Finally, the author thanks the editorial staff at Greenwich Medical for their encouragement, patience and expertise.

J.F.C.
 Melbourne, 2001

xvi

