It is many years since I rushed to the scene of a respiratory arrest but the quick-fire A-B-C-D notes of the opening chapter of *Emergencies in Respiratory Medicine* brought the memories flooding back. It sets the tone for this book and its companion the *Oxford Handbook*, now packaged together. They are targeted at hospital trainees on the front line: written ‘by specialist registrars for specialist registrars’. They come with plastic covers to protect from blood and other body fluids and are handily pocket sized—though with the demise of the hospital white coat that format may well now be redundant.

‘Emergencies’ sets out its information both by presenting symptom and by condition with separate sections on investigations and practical issues (tracheostomy, pleural aspiration, oxygen therapy and others). There are short notes on inhalation injuries, diving, imported infections and numerous other topics.

The ‘Handbook’ provides a comprehensive review of respiratory medicine, again in note form. Its alphabetical ordering of clinical conditions is unusual but works remarkably well. There are separate sections on clinical presentations, practical procedures and supportive care. The latter includes an unusual (and too brief) section on benefits and financial entitlements.

There are inevitable quibbles in books of this format and there is some duplication of material. The sections on oxygen therapy in the Handbook are now out of date with the current British Thoracic Society guidelines. Miners do not need chest radiographs every 4 years, and Surveillance of Work-Related and Occupational Respiratory Disease (SWORD) reporting is mentioned only in the pneumoconiosis section rather than with asthma where it is probably more relevant.

For trainees in respiratory medicine, these books are invaluable: their lists and bullet points facilitate a structured approach to problems. Most non-specialists will probably prefer a more discursive approach and the handbooks are unlikely to replace more detailed texts on library shelves.

**Rating**

- ★★★ for OPs
- ★★★★ for any trainee doing acute medicine
- ★★ for OH trainees

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