Book Reviews

High Altitude Medicine and Physiology, Fourth Edition
John B. West, Robert B. Schoene, and James S. Milledge
London: Hodder Arnold, 2007
US $149.50, 484 pages, hardcover

By the time a book reaches its fourth edition, it has proven its value. Though eager to update their work, the authors of such books are understandably reluctant to tamper with their successful formula. The authors of the fourth edition of *High Altitude Medicine and Physiology* have met this challenge admirably. The new fourth edition incorporates considerable new knowledge in the field without losing the book’s identity or focus.

In some ways, this book is actually a fifth edition, as it is the lineal descendant of *Mountain Medicine,* by Michael Ward, who was one of the authors of the first three editions. Michael Ward, who retired from the enterprise after the third edition, is memorialized in the current volume. He has been replaced by Robert B. ("Brownie") Schoene, who is well-known in the altitude community for his scholarship, as are the other two authors, Drs West and Milledge.

The style remains sparse but clear and consistent. The authors made the decision to incorporate major recent advances in genetic and molecular medicine into existing material rather than to include separate new chapters. This maintains the coherent flow of the text. Although it is impossible for a textbook to keep completely up to date, the authors have covered the trends sufficiently well to carry this edition forward for some time.

The authors have kept the book the same length as previous editions. This necessitated the removal of some material, particularly sections on heat and cold, which are not specific to high altitude. Other sections have been expanded, especially the chapters on women and extremes of age. The references remain at the back of the book rather than in the individual chapters.

If there are shortcomings to the new edition, they have to do with some of the material that was removed. Several useful maps and photos have been cut. Attentive readers will also miss the signature photograph, which appeared in the three previous editions, showing the original authors on skis during the 1960 Silver Hut Expedition.

With this edition, *High Altitude Medicine and Physiology* retains its place as the leading scholarly text on the subject. It is less encyclopedic and more clinically oriented than *High Altitude: An Exploration of Human Adaptation.* Anyone with more than a passing interest in high altitude medicine will want to have this latest edition on the bookshelf for easy reference. Those who are new to the subject or old hands who want a good review will want to sit down and read a few chapters or the entire book.

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References

Wilderness Medicine, 5th edition
Paul S. Auerbach, MD, Editor
US $199.00, 2316 pages, hardcover, plus Reference DVD-ROM

I must confess to eagerly looking forward to each new edition of Dr Paul Auerbach’s innovative and comprehensive *Wilderness Medicine.* And it’s not because I was his co-editor for the first 2 editions. Nor is it because Paul kindly forwards a signed copy of each edition for prominent display in my library. I simply enjoy the sense of exploration upon immersing myself in this richly illustrated and superbly edited medical landscape. This newest edition doesn’t disappoint. At over 2300 pages, with 157 authors, 97 chapters, and countless photographs and illustrations, the fifth edition of *Wilderness Medicine* is as much a wilderness encyclopedia as it is a guide to the practice of medicine in the wilderness.

But as exhaustive a text as *Wilderness Medicine* may be, nothing could have prepared me for my first wilderness emergency involving the editor himself. Some years ago, back in the days of wood skis, pine tar, wax, and 3-pin bindings, Paul asked for my instruction with cross-country skiing. We set out on a beautiful, clear day near Dartmouth College, following a winding ridge-top trail in fresh snow. As I dropped through a small chute with a particularly menacing tree at the bottom, I called back