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Book Reviews: Technical Books Section

(Page 9 c - Review by John Gall, Australia)

FEATURED BOOK

AN EXCELLENT TEXT



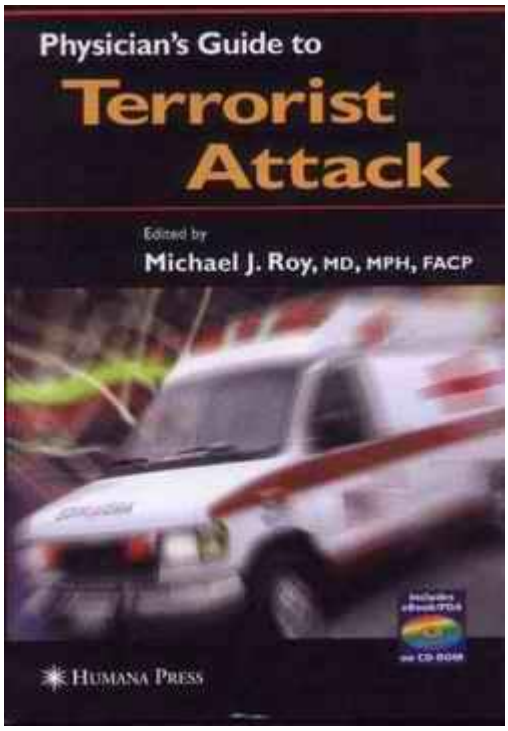
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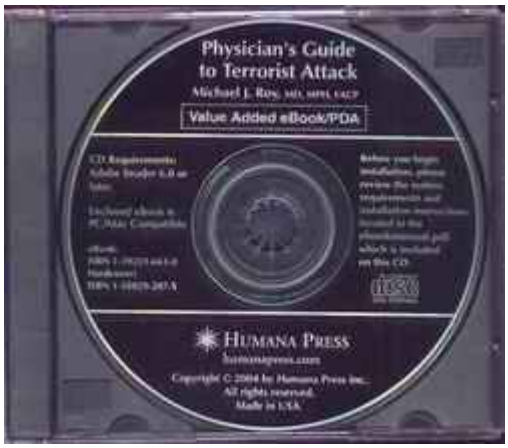
[Extracts] [Interview with Michael J. Roy]

Rating : 9.0
★★★★★★★★★★
(10/5)

Physician's Guide to Terrorist Attack, 1 st Edition, (includes eBook/PDA on CD-Rom) *Edited by* Michael J. Roy. Hard Bound, 7 " x 10".
Humana Press Inc., 999 Riverview Drive, Suite 208, Totowa, New Jersey 07512; Publication Date 27 October, 2003. xvi + 405 pages, ISBN 1-58829-207-X (Hardback, acid-free Paper), E-ISBN 1-59259-663-0. Price $99.50

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Terrorism has been a fact of life for centuries but appears to have attained new dimensions since the events of September 11, 2001, and particularly now with the ongoing conflict in the Middle East. Most terrorist activities to date have involved physical force in one or other form predominantly using conventional weapons. There has been growing concern, however, that the probability for deliberate use of biological weapons by a terrorist group is increasing. Such activities have engaged the minds of popular novelists such as John Case in "*The First Horseman*" and, more recently by Tom Clancy in "*Rainbow Six*". There have, of course, been many episodes of bioterrorism over the years and examples of this include the deliberate contamination of salad bars in Oregon in 1984 with *Salmonella typhimurium* by the followers of the Baghwan Shree Rajneesh and the release of nerve gas in the Tokyo subway in 1995 by the Aum Shinrikyo cult. Following September 11, multiple bioterrorism scares were encountered world wide. Biological warfare is not a new concept and has been used for very many centuries. The production of bioterrorism agents is relatively easy but their mass dissemination is more difficult than is popularly portrayed. Despite this, the threat of bioterrorism is increasing and has become a major concern for medical, government and military agencies throughout the world. Military organizations have long maintained manuals on biological and chemical warfare but it is only more recently that such information has become more widely available, particularly to the general medical population. Given the increasing threat

of bioterrorism, "*The Physicians Guide to Terrorist Attack*" is a timely and valuable addition to the medical literature.

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Edited by Michael Roy, "*The Physicians Guide to Terrorist Attack*" provides an all-encompassing, succinct presentation on the major areas of biological, chemical and radiological weaponry. The list of contributors is an impressive collection of experts in the field, predominantly from the US Armed Forces academic and research institutions. There are four sections within the 400 odd pages. The first part deals with issues of responding to a terrorist incident including a general overview of the lessons learnt of mass casualty events, hospital preparation in response to an incident, physician recognition of bioterrorism-related diseases and an historical introduction to nuclear, biological and chemical weaponry. The second part addresses the major biological agents including bacterial and viral agents and biological toxins. The chapters have a uniform presentation providing background information to each agent, information on the pathogenesis, the clinical presentation and diagnosis and treatment. Of particular use in each chapter is the case vignette where an illustrative case with symptoms and investigative findings are briefly presented. The third section of the text describes the various chemical agents and the chapter format is similar to that of the biological agents. The fourth section discusses briefly the other areas of bioterrorism that are relevant including radiation effects, explosives and the impact of terrorist incidents on human psychopathology.

...Roy has succeeded in this single volume to compile all the essential and important information necessary for a physician to attend to a terrorist attack should such weapons be used. It is an essential guide and addition to the library of any physician who may be confronted with a terrorist attack, be it within the military or civilian emergency response setting. An excellent text...

Overall, the text is well presented with each relevant area being addressed in a succinct manner. There are appropriate accompanying tables, photographs and diagrams, the only disappointing aspect being that the photographs are in black and white. Overall, the text is very easy to read and provides a very sound, general and background knowledge in all primary areas of potential terrorist attack that is relevant to the medical practitioner. With a multi-authored text, the writing style can vary markedly from chapter to chapter but the editor has done an excellent job in ensuring that there is uniformity of style throughout.

There is one minor criticism. The text has been written predominantly from a United States perspective. For the book to be of greater value worldwide, additional information on other diagnostic approaches would have been an advantage. This criticism is only a minor one and most practitioners in various locations around the world will have some understanding of what facilities, prophylactic, diagnostic and treatment agents are available in their area.

An additional item of considerable value is an accompanying CD ROM that contains an Adobe eBook version of the text. Using Version 6 of Adobe, this can readily be viewed on a computer. It also contains a facility to synchronise the text with a PDA. Unfortunately, this reviewer had great difficulty transferring the text to his PDA which is a Palm Tungsten C. Being computer literate and not generally having such difficulties, it is one area of disappointment but presumably the error is more to do with the reviewer than the PDA facility.

The title of this book indicates that this is a physician's guide to terrorist attack. Roy has succeeded in this single volume to compile all the essential and important information necessary for a

physician to attend to a terrorist attack should such weapons be used. It is an essential guide and addition to the library of any physician who may be confronted with a terrorist attack, be it within the military or civilian emergency response setting. An excellent text.

-Dr John AM Gall



-John AM Gall
Dr. John Gall is on the editorial board of Anil Aggrawal's Internet Journal of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology. Click image to have more information about him.

Review 1 by Margaret Stark, UK

Review 2 by Jason Payne James, UK

Review 3 by John Gall, Australia

Review 4 by Bryan Chrz, USA

Some Extracts from this book

An Exclusive interview with Michael J. Roy

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