

Preface

The Philadelphia Burn Unit, located in Temple University Hospital, has dedicated its services to the care of injured patients since 1974. Inpatient admissions average 200 per year, with 2700 outpatient visits annually. *The Essential Burn Unit Handbook* is based on treatments that have evolved over a period of years and are at this time the standard of care at the burn center.

As residents serving in the Philadelphia Burn Unit, we were blessed with an experienced nursing staff, established protocols that were tempered with experience, and attending surgeons who understood the plight of the house officer. They taught us well, and they gave us the necessary latitude to mature, gain confidence, and test our mettle.

Yet we felt there had to be a better way to obtain the essential knowledge base quickly. We tried various textbooks, but we could not find concise answers to urgent issues in any one source, and the information we did find was not portable to the ER, OR, burn unit, rehab unit, trauma bay, clinic, or ward. We have been in the situation in which *you alone* have to make decisions about the management of your patient, where you must do the best you can with the tools available to you. It became clear to us that the oral tradition in which the chief resident imparts knowledge, experience, and pearls needed to be written down for the benefit of junior house officers, students, and everyone on the burn team.

This handbook represents our effort to fill a void and to communicate the common practices and workings of an active burn unit,

with the rationales behind them and sample protocols to guide treatment. Our goal is to enhance the educational experience of the house officer rotating through the burn unit so that he or she can concentrate on care of the patient.

The book covers the spectrum of burn care, from initial assessment and treatment to long-term sequelae. We have included a wealth of topics that surgical residents, emergency medicine residents, and critical care fellows will encounter. These include nutrition, antibiotics, wound care, and some of the unique pathologic conditions seen in this unique and often critically injured patient population. There is content on inhalation injury and electrical and chemical burns, as well as pediatric patient management. Health care personnel involved in the care of burn patients, such as dietitians, occupational therapists, physical therapists, nurses, EMTs, respiratory therapists, and medical and nursing students, will benefit from reading this book. The handbook also includes sample orders and templates for patient presentation and organization of notes. A glossary is provided for quick reference to the many acronyms and abbreviations used in this setting.

It is our hope that this book will help the resident to provide better patient care and will shorten the resident's learning curve. This concise, pocket-sized manual goes beyond the popular "on call" and "secrets" book series, presenting more of the day-to-day management modalities than the surgical house officer books.

The treatment of burn patients is constantly evolving, and new techniques and modalities are being evaluated continually. Each patient represents a unique challenge, and therapy must be planned and tailored to the individual patient from the time of admission. Some protocols may vary from hospital to hospital—as in all of medicine, there may be more than one way to do things—but it is important to recognize that the principles remain the same.