This concise book (140 pages), written in an elegant easy-to-read style is aimed primarily at aircrew, especially those studying to write the “Human Performance and Limitations” examination conducted by the United Kingdom Civil Aviation Authority (UK CAA). It avoids medical terminology to cater to its primary target readership. While discussing Spatial Disorientation, the authors write thus “...because the otoliths act very much as a spirit level, a pilot may readily mistake acceleration for pitch, a situation known as the somatogravic illusion”. This kind of explanation goes very well not just for the non-medicos, but enhances ease of understanding for all readers. For the practitioner of Aviation Medicine, it provides a good guideline on the subject that will aid suitable preparation for crew-room talks and presentations on ‘Human Factors’. It will also serve to stimulate the young squadron and airline doctors to develop an interest in the challenging field of Crew Resource Management.

The book is divided into four well-organized parts. The first part on ‘Basic Aviation Physiology and Health Maintenance’ is quite elementary and the Aviation Medicine Specialists would already be well versed with this. Part two on ‘Basic Aviation Psychology’ and Part three on ‘Stress Fatigue and their Management’ are part of the syllabus for MD (Av Med), but both serving specialists as well as students will benefit from the way these are discussed in this book. One of the hallmarks of book is the extensive usage of real life examples of aircraft accidents and incidents. In the section on ‘Cognition in Aviation’ in Part three, appropriate examples of skill-based, rule-based and knowledge-based behavior and their pitfalls, ensure clarity in understanding. The students would do well to remember, however, that the book is primarily meant for pilots. When, for example, the authors advise the pilots to trust their instruments rather than their sensations, the suggestion may be too simplistic. The problems of ‘overpowering sensations’ and measures to be adopted to overcome the same need to be fully understood by the practitioners of Aviation Medicine, in order to explain the same to the aviators.

Part Four on ‘Social Psychology and Ergonomics of the Flight Deck’ is indeed very well written and allows a fair understanding of the dynamics of crew resource management after discussing individual personality differences in humans. The sub-sections on ‘Social Skills and Interactive Style’ as well as on ‘Group Decision Making’ are particularly well covered. These and related aspects are not addressed in such detail in standard textbooks of Aviation Medicine and are therefore of greater benefit to the PG students.

Overall, the book is a must-read for all Aviation Medicine Specialists and PG students. The cost (approx Rs 1850/-) is a trifle prohibitive to recommend possession by all, but libraries in Station Medicare Centres at flying bases, Medical Sections of higher formations and Airline Medical Departments should definitely bid for the book.

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