



## 3.0 Training

The most important aspect of survival medicine is to obtain knowledge and the skills related to it. Medicine is dangerous and uninformed decisions and actions will kill people. But, having said that, a lot of medicine is common sense. Anyone with a bit of intelligence, a good anatomy and physiology book, and a good medical text can easily learn the basics. Although, I have to stress: There is no alternative to a trained health care professional; anything else is taking risks. Obviously in survival situation any informed medical care is better than no medical care. Notice I said informed, if you really don't have a clue what you are doing, you will be very dangerous.

### 3.1 Formal Training

- Professional medical training: One option is undertaking college study in a medical area e.g. Medicine, Nursing, Physicians Assistant, Paramedic, Vet, etc. Obviously this is not an option for many, but it is the ideal situation.
- EMT/Wilderness EMT Course: The much more realistic option. These courses give an basic background in anatomy and physiology, medical terminology and the essentials of emergency medicine. It provides the basis for additional self-directed learning. Most community colleges offer these courses. The basics are well covered in the "first responder" courses, which, although very elementary, provide a good stepping stone to the more advanced courses, while not requiring the same time commitments as full EMT courses.

### 3.2 Informal Training

There are a variety of options here. Certainly, locally (New Zealand, and I realize the US may be different) it is possible to gain some experience in an ER. In our emergency department we regularly have a variety of people coming through for practical experience, from army medics, to off-shore island forest service staff, to fishing boat medics. If you can provide a good reason for wanting to gain skills in the emergency room such as "sailing your boat to the South Pacific", then the potential to gain practical experience in suturing, inserting IV's, and burns management is there. Another option is befriending (or recruiting) a health care professional and arranging teaching through them. It is common for doctors to be asked to talk to various groups on different topics, so an invitation to talk to a "tramping club" about pain relief or treating a fracture in the bush would not be seen as unusual.

## 3.2 Volunteering

Many ambulances and fire services have volunteer sections or are completely run by volunteers. Through these services you may be able to obtain formal EMT training and at the same time gain valuable practical skills and experience, overcome fear of dealing with acutely sick people and also work with some great people.

Organizations such as the Red Cross or Search and Rescue units also offer basic first aid training as well as training in disaster relief and outdoor skills. It is also often possible to arrange "ride alongs" with ambulance and paramedic units, as the 3rd person on the crew.

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