

## Preface

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*“Intellectuals solve problems, geniuses avoid them.” Albert Einstein*

... And the rest of us mortals, provoke them, suffer the consequences, and do our best to solve them.

As I finished this edition, my daughter Celia asked me: “Why are you interested in writing a book about First Aid?” Several reasons came to mind. The first one was the powerful influence of **Dr Pietro Bassi** of Courmayeur, the mountain physician who taught me the basis of traumatology, resuscitation, and rescue techniques for mountain and road accidents, and with whom I shared six months of work. The second reason, which influenced me greatly, was the experience of living through terrible mountain accidents, where people were saved *in extremis*. Some accidents were unforeseeable, being either the consequence of taking risks or from nature’s unpredictable forces: serac (block of ice) falling, avalanches or cracks in the glaciers. Others were due to recklessness. Looking back, I can recall one experience that scarred me deeply; an accident I was responsible for. Climbing to the top of Pedraforca, by the Verdet, with a group of family and friends, I took a detour in the final portion of the climb and kept on going through a very steep path that required climbing using my hands. Several youngsters followed me; they considered this path fun and daring, and apparently without danger – among them was **Oriol**. I did not discourage them, on the contrary, I felt flattered, and we kept on going. Oriol’s father, **Lluís**, had been my guide in Pedraforca when I was fifteen years old. We were climbing a relatively easy rocky part, when a block of rock detached from the mountain and Oriol fell. We were free climbing and were not using ropes; a thoughtless act. Oriol started rolling down, passed over rugged terrain, and missed multiple landings without stopping. Finally, when he reached a much wider landing, he stopped. If he had continued his fall, some thirty metres further, a vertical precipice would have awaited him at the base of the main channel. His guardian angel, luck or simply destiny, helped to avoid the fatal fall. When he stopped on that landing, he was conscious; he talked and moved slowly. Everybody helped with the rescue and a helicopter took him to the hospital. The shame and guilt I felt at my own reckless decision involving young, trusting people have lasted till this day.

I told Celia: “I think this book was born from my unconscious as a way to overcome accidents, to teach others to avoid them, and tackle the assistance in accidents successfully.”

That was a painful lesson I learned, for I was the adult and was supposed to be aware of my responsibilities. I had also been very reckless, and my irresponsible behaviour had affected others. Accordingly, my position in this manual cannot be that of the expert who advises caution from a point of reason, common sense, and wise prudence but rather from the recognition that any one of us can be the cause of accidents, which can deeply affect others.

To prevent further accidents, it is crucial to know one’s own limits, as well as the risks that terrains pose. This is my deepest wish.

Once we are motivated, learning these first aid techniques and applying the knowledge of basic medicine in each situation will allow us to help others be effective, avoid intense suffering, and ultimately save lives.