anaesthesia were that simple! My main criticism of this book is that it frequently offers a simplistic approach to problems posed by patients who, in real life, do not conform to any norm.

The authors' objective is to present a revision of the theoretical aspects of medical problems with advice on preoperative assessment and the presentation of guidelines to intraoperative and postoperative anaesthetic management. These objectives are achieved in Chapter 1, which is devoted to cardiovascular disease. It contains useful information in a clear format—a chapter that all examinees should read. At the end of the book are chapters on Psychiatry and Anaesthesia and Old Age, where the educational approach, based on general principles has much to commend it. The middle of the book, however, tends to become a seemingly endless list of what to do in various conditions. It will undoubtedly be used as a reference text, but makes for very heavy reading.

When the authors have dealt with general principles and outline an approach to a problem, I found their advice to be refreshingly down to earth. However, when specific management is offered, it is inevitable that there is bound to be disagreement and I would take issue with much of the practical advice offered. To give just one example, the authors state that tachycardia should be avoided when antagonizing neuromuscular blockade in patients with mitral stenosis, but their suggestion to trainees that an alternative approach is to use atracurium or vecuronium and allow it to wear off spontaneously is, without qualification, not appropriate advice. In some parts of the text, the authors appear to lose their way, straying into intensive care, which of necessity must be dealt with very superficially.

The text is 385 pages long, and references are not provided in the text, which is an advantage. At the end of each chapter, a list of articles and chapters for further reading are provided.

This book will undoubtedly find its way into personal collections of junior anaesthetists; it will be used as a day-to-day reference book when confronted with specific problems. I would urge them not to follow the advice proffered without careful consideration of the specific problems that their patients present. As an educational text with examinations in mind, I would recommend this book to anaesthetic trainees.

P. Barnes


Neonatal Anaesthesia in the Current Topics in Anaesthesia series first appeared in 1981. The authors have now revised and updated the contents and have wisely decided to enlarge the original remit to include perioperative care. This is because there have been considerable advances in the art and science of neonatology, with resultant increase in survival of many preterm babies who, hitherto, would not have been even considered viable let alone present for anaesthesia and surgery. Their successful outcome is, therefore, vitally dependent on meticulous pre- and postoperative care.

The basic format of the first edition has been maintained, but with considerable expansion so as to incorporate the increased information on drugs, techniques and concepts. The book is divided into sections on perinatal physiology, the surgical neonate (which includes the preoperative preparation), anaesthesia—basic principles, anaesthesia for specific conditions, postoperative care and resuscitation of the newborn. Three appendices cover unusual conditions in the neonate with implications for the anaesthetist, guidelines for drug dosage and normal physiological values in the neonate and adult.

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BOOK REVIEWS

these matters, finishing with a list of suppliers of PCA systems, ventures no further than:

"As a research tool PCA is valuable..."
"More studies need to be done to clarify..."
"Even if it should never become...widely used...PCA..."

Equally, in respect of spinal opiates, Dr Dodson leaves the
reader with the impression that further evaluation might pull
a rabbit from the hat. Is it not more accurate to say that the
spinal opiate approach is also limited, if not a blind alley?
The final chapter ("The Way Forward") points in no
particular direction. May I offer these thoughts? Suppose we
had a long-acting local anaesthetic and a short-acting
inhalation agent, both with minimal toxicity and side effects.
Would that help?

Alastair A. Spence

Effects of Anesthesia. Clinical Physiology Series. Edited by
B. G. Covino, H. A. Fozzard, K. Rehder and G. Stri-
chartz. Published by the American Physiological Society.
Pp. 224; indexed; illustrated. Price $44.

The concept of bringing together in one volume the molecular,
cellular and whole organism effects of anesthesia is laudable.
There have been a number of advances in these fields which
have not yet reached the textbooks and this volume from the
American Physiological Society is timely. In order to be
intelligible to the non-specialist reader, it is essential that new
techniques are explained in sufficient detail to permit
understanding of experimental results. Regrettably, this is not
the case with the early chapters of the first section on molecular
and membrane effects, particularly that by Smith and Butler
on nuclear magnetic resonance studies of membranes. The first
section is completed by three chapters on local anesthetic
effects on membranes.

In contrast, the opening chapter in the section on the
respiratory system by Hornbein is a model of lucidity. The
following chapters on the mechanics of respiration, chest wall
movement and the pulmonary circulation should be compul-
sory reading for examination candidates.

The final section on cardiac and circulatory effects includes
chapters on i.v. anesthetic agents and narcotic analgesics and,
finally, regional anesia by the principal editor.

The book is well illustrated and referenced and contains
very few errors. The most notable is an error in Equation 1
on p. 125. This book should find a place on the shelves of depart-
ment libraries as a useful review of current theories, and as a
pointer to future research.

C. D. Hanning

Clinics in Anaesthesiology. Volume 3, No. 2: Neuromuscular
Blockade. Edited by J. Norman. Published by W. B.
Saunders Company. Pp. 485; indexed; illustrated. Price
£13.75.

This book, one of a series of Clinics in Anaesthesiology, is a most
useful monograph for anaesthetists, all of whom must need an
updated account on neuromuscular blocking agents when the
developments in this field are so extensive. It is compact, easily
portable and contains, in addition to the exhaustive factual
content for its size, the extra asset of impressively compre-
prehensive lists of reference at the end of each chapter. The
international list of contributors, from Saudi Arabia to San
Francisco and from Groningen to Glasgow, is made up of well
known clinicians working in this field, and a high standard is
set.

The book initially summarizes the present knowledge of the
physiology and pharmacology of the neuromuscular junction,
including the drug interactions that occur at this site. This is
a most stimulating start useful, not only for examination
candidates, but also for more senior anaesthetists wishing to
update their knowledge. The theoretical concepts of pharma-
cokinetics with respect to neuromuscular blocking drugs are
then covered, and perhaps it would have been preferable to
follow on here with the pharmacokinetics of the anticholin-
estereses, but for some reason the problems encountered when
muscle relaxants are used in patients with hepatic or renal
disease are covered first. In these areas marked benefits in
patient management have been experienced with the advent of
atracurium and vecuronium, and both these topics are detailed
well.

Then the lighter reading starts under the heading of
"Clinical Practice", with descriptions of the two newer
depolarizing relaxants atracurium and vecuronium,
physically and together with interesting information about the very long
acting blocker not yet available in Great Britain—pipecurium.
No monograph about neuromuscular blockade would be
complete without a chapter on that unique drug, suxametho-
nium, and it is comprehensively covered, although it is perhaps
surprising that it was not the first drug to open this section. An
attempt is then made, in two chapters, to contrast the use of
muscle relaxants in the U.S.A. and Great Britain. These
chapters probably add little to the book and one chapter on the
history of neuromuscular blocking agents may have been more
informative.

Reviews then follow on three subspecialty areas in which
detailed information for clinicians on the use of neuromuscular
blockers is less readily available: in children, in the elderly and
in ophthalmic surgery. These sections are particularly useful
for the anaesthetist who is not regularly working in these fields
as they summarize well the present situation. The book ends
with two chapters on the monitoring of neuromuscular function—techniques which clinicians are using more and
more regularly, and necessarily so, for the rapid recovery from
the newer agents may otherwise cause embarrassment for the
more junior anaesthetist when rousing exclamations from the
surgeon are heard! A chapter on the use of myoneural blockade
in patients with muscle disorders, and in particular malignant
hyperpyrexia, would perhaps have been preferable, but this is
"icing on the cake". This is a useful book and, as it costs only
£13.75p, no anaesthetist can afford to be without it.

J. M. Hunter