BOOK REVIEWS

HAZARDS AND ERRORS IN ANAESTHESIA. D.A. BUXTON HOPKIN. Springer Verlag, Berlin - Heidelberg, New York, 1980. Price U.S. \$24.80.

THE AUTHOR defines this book as having a twofold purpose, namely "to provide information for beginners about the pitfalls and hazards of anaesthesia and to help the occasional anaesthetist in remote areas when confronted with requests to anaesthetize for unfamiliar surgical operations". He has made a valiant effort to achieve these dual aims but unfortunately has fallen short of target. The book is full of inconsistencies and omissions, some of them no doubt due to the fact that what few references are given are limited almost entirely to the British literature; thus many significant North American contributions and techniques are entirely ignored. Given the kind of reader to whom the book is addressed, one cannot help but wonder why three pages are devoted to renal transplantation when operations on the bladder and prostate are accorded exactly 13 lines, with no mention being made, for instance, of dilutional hyponatraemia. The book is full of assertions which are hard to accept such as, for instance, that lithium prolongs "curare", that widespread adoption of enflurane is unlikely, that ketamine is a new agent, and that mask induction with inhalation anaesthetics should be the preferred method for the novice for anaesthetizing patients with a full stomach or for obstetrical delivery.

Even ignoring these and other statements of doubtful validity, as for instance the reference to nupercaine, prilocaine and mepivacaine as the only agents for subarachnoid block, or at least limited applicability to modern practice and experience, it is still difficult to define the kind of reader who would benefit from this book. This is not to say there is not good and useful information in it, which indeed there is, but it is diluted by many irrelevancies and some subjects are treated too superficially to be of value. In this connection one might mention the chapter on adverse drug reactions which, in a little less than three pages, deals only with steroids, cytotoxic agents and allergy, while ignoring a vast array of drug interactions which surely constitute one of the major hazards in present day anaesthesia.

The index too leaves much to be desired; for instance "shock" is not listed, although a chapter is devoted to it.

GORDON M. WYANT

HUMIDIFICATION OF ANESTHETIC GASES. J. CHALON, M. ALI, H. TURNDORF, G.K. FISCHGRUND. Springfield, Ill., Charles C. Thomas, 1981. Price U.S. \$17.50.

THIS SHORT MONOGRAPH is a useful collection of current information related to humidification of inhaled gases. The preface notes that the text has been written as a teaching manual for residents in anaesthesiology as a reference book. The initial section reviews the physics of water vaporization, the effect of humidity on the epithelium of the airways, and advantages and disadvantages of high inspired humidity. In the subsequent three sections instrumentation (anaesthetic circuits as sources of humidity, humidifiers), existing anaesthetic breathing systems and newer more humidity-efficient breathing systems are discussed. The concluding summary section, separated into short chapters on "state of the art" and "conclusions" is disappointing due to its brevity. Missing is an in-depth detailed discussion of the information contained in the preceding chapters. The summary is more in form of a paper abstract than of a discussion section. All considered, this monograph will be extremely valuable for all who seek information about humidification of inspired gases. I suspect that interest in this text will extend far beyond the field of clinical anaesthesia to other areas of acute care medicine.

DOUGLAS B. CRAIG

OBSTETRIC ANESTHESIA AND PERINATOLOGY. ERMELANDO V. COSMI (Editor). Appleton - Century Croft, New York, 1981. Price U.S. \$42.50.

IN THE PREFACE of this book Doctor Cosmi states that he has prepared this text for nine different specialty physicians who may care for the mother, foetus, and newborn. This is a very ambitious undertaking; but despite a great deal of work, it is not completely successful.

The book first of all suffers from an uneven style of writing. Most chapters are by different authors and the style varies with each. This detracts from the cohesiveness of the text. Some chapters are repetitious, while others demonstrate disagreement between authors. There is a great deal of basic animal research included in chapters, such as Fetal Homeostasis, while other chapters are devoid of recent scientific data.

The scope of the book is very broad but each individual discipline will be disappointed in the detail afforded individual topics. Anaesthetists will be frustrated by some of the chapters because the discussion relevant to anaesthetic agents and techniques are too general and superficial.

The authors do not, with the exception of Chapters 18 and 19, present their own conclusions plainly. They seem more concerned with

cataloguing the research done in their particular topics. The clinician will find this frustrating if he is looking for practical information to apply to his clinical practice.

However, nearly all chapters have been extremely well referenced. Chapter 15, on Drugs and Anaesthetics in the Management of Preterm Labour and Delivery, has over 600 references. From this point of view this book may be useful as a reference guide, especially for information on basic science research.

My overall impression of this book is that a great deal of information has been gathered together, but its presentation lacks clarity and cohesion. The book would be useful as part of a larger reference library but may not have much appeal for the individual physician.

DIANE R. BIEHL