Book Reviews

Pharmacology & Physiology in Anesthetic Practice, 2nd Edition

Robert K. Stoelting. J. B. Lippincott Company, Philadelphia, 1991. pp. 896. \$89.50 U.S. ISBN 0-397-51129-9

Having enjoyed Dr. Stoelting's previous textbooks, particularly *Anesthesia and Co-existent Disease*, I looked forward to reviewing this second edition of *Pharmacology and Physiology in Anesthetic Practice*. Dr. Stoelting's single authorship once again provides a very readable, consistent coverage of the major topics in pharmacology and a less comprehensive review of physiology. Since the first edition several new drugs have been introduced including desflurane, mivacurium, flumazenil and others and, as stated in the preface, the physiology section has been completely rewritten. In addition to a lucid writing style the book is well formatted with clear outline headings and a clean appearance. Graphs, charts and line drawings abound and references are selective but as up to date as possible in textbook publishing (1990). The price of \$107.40 is manageable.

As good as the pharmacology section is, I cannot recommend the reworked physiology section to any but the most junior of residents. The brevity of coverage of the respiratory system (33 pages) will not satisfy the questions of graduate anaesthetists or provide more than an outline for senior residents preparing for fellowship examinations.

Overall Dr. Stoelting's book presents a first-rate discussion of pharmacology with an anaesthesia slant. Other authors (Dundee, Wood) also provide quality volumes in this area and one's preference will likely be based on the author's style and the current nature of the information.

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On Narcotism by the Inhalation of Vapours

John Snow. (A facsimile edition with an introductory essay by Richard H. Ellis.) Royal Society of Medicine Services Limited, London, 1991. pp 112. £20.00 Sterling ISBN # 1-85315-158-0

This reproduction of John Snow's original articles presents these classical treatises in an updated format. He published them as 18 separate articles on anaesthesia in the *London*

Medical Gazette (1848–51), but they were later issued as three pamphlets containing seven, nine and two of the series. Few copies now remain. Possibly the only complete set of these pamphlets was found in the Library of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Edinburgh, Scotland and this was used in the compilation of the text.

Although the articles were written within two years of the introduction of anaesthesia and the experimental methodology of the times was limited, the scientific understanding of the principles of inhalational anaesthesia is remarkably advanced. The recognition of the need to deliver anaesthetic vapours in a controlled manner led to the design of Snow's chloroform inhaler: illustrated in the now familiar diagram shown on page 34 and the front cover of the book. Turning to the accounts of the earliest anaesthetic deaths with chloroform in Newcastle, Cincinnati, Hyderabad and Boulogne on pages 23–31 provides graphic insight into cases which are still discussed today.

None of these facts would attract the modern reader without the guidance of Dr. Richard Ellis's introductory chapter and index of the contents. He has succeeded in going beyond the task of faithfully recording important facts and preserving this historical information. He has put Dr. Snow's contributions to medicine as a pioneer anaesthetist and a family practitioner into perspective. Perhaps his epidemiological studies on cholera were of greater importance and his involvement in London medical societies essential to communicating his ideas. A review of the medical journals of the period reveals that the *Lancet* started in 1823 and that Dr. Snow's relationship with the publication may not have been cordial! Such details make this interesting reading.

Inevitably, historical books appeal to a limited audience, but this one would be a treasure to find in any library.

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Surgical Management of the Diabetic Patient

Michael Bergman and Gregorio A. Sicard (Eds.). Raven Press Ltd., New York, 1991. pp 427. \$90.00 U.S. ISBN # 0-88167-720-5

I set out to read this compilation thinking that it was a mistitled book about perioperative care of the diabetic patient, and, as such, might contain useful information for

anaesthetists. In fact, the title is appropriate and this is primarily a book for surgeons.

Lots of good advice regarding perioperative insulin and nutritional support is given but, unfortunately, it is not consolidated into one chapter for easy reference. There is a practical chapter on nephropathy, some nice flow charts for preoperative cardiac workup and pretransplant evaluation, and a comprehensive discussion of discharge planning. However, in 396 pages, I found only two pearls which will affect my daily practice. First, coughing and hypertension should be kept to a minimum when proliferative retinopathy is present to avoid vitreous haemorrhage. Second, diabetics with other evidence of neuropathy frequently have asymptomatic oesophagogastric dysmotility which responds to metaclopramide.

Although this book was not directed at anaesthetists, some literary and professional annoyances deserve mention. The Preface is ridiculously polysyllabic. Repetitive information about the foot is spread among three different chapters. In places, anaesthetic considerations are conspicuously absent (aortofemoral bypass, hypertension), or underestimated (phaeochromocytoma, obstetrics). Certain information is just plain wrong, such as the advice that nasogastric aspiration should be done before induction of anaesthesia in a patient with a full stomach. One contributor informs us that most ocular surgery is done under "local." The neuropathy chapter contains a full page of confused and unfocused anaesthetic information. First we are advised to avoid all neuromuscular relaxants. Then it is stated that nondepolarizing agents may be appropriate. There is no mention in this chapter of careful positioning and regional blockade.

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