Book reviews

Opioids in anesthesia

F.G. Estafanous, Editor. Butterworth Publishers, Stoneham, MA, 1984. \$34.95 us

Opioids in Anesthesia is the presentations of a Spring 1983 symposium at the Cleveland Clinic, the aim of which was to review the historical role of opioids, evaluate their current status, and predict their future role in anaesthetic practice.

This hard-covered book of 318 pages includes contributions from 79 authors and other participants who took part in the discussion periods. The book is divided into nine sections: historical background and general concepts; composition, action, and physiologic effects; ultra-short acting opioids; short-acting opioids in cardiovascular anaesthesia; adjuvants to opioid anaesthesia; opioid anaesthesia and postoperative care; and summation. Each section contains between four and eight chapters followed by a transcript of the floor discussion.

Publication of the proceedings of meetings is not always successful: firstly, the topics may not be of general interest, secondly, speakers may be tardy in submitting their papers which may then require comprehensive editorial review, and thirdly, the resulting production time lag may yield a summary which is only of sentimental interest to the participants. However, with this publication, Dr. Estafanous is to be congratulated.

Although the topics covered have a heavy cardiovascular bias, there is enough information of general interest to warrant purchase of the book by individual anaesthetists. I particularly enjoyed the chapters "Narcotic anesthesia?" by C.J. Hull, "Opiate receptors, endogenous ligands, and anesthesia: a synopsis" by D.B. Carr and J.E. Fisher, "The use of short-acting narcotics in obstetric anaesthesia and the effects on the newborn" by J.H. Eisele, Jr. and "Opioid reversal and postoperative narcotic analgesia" by T.C. Smith. Each chapter is well referenced in the Vancouver format. The book is easy to read, with crisp black and white type on non-glare paper with clear figures and tables. The quality of writing throughout is excellent, due not only to the contributors, but also to the exacting editorial

standards. For example, editing of the discussion periods has resulted in clear, well-phrased questions with answers that still manage to retain the distinctive style of the participants. Lastly, although the symposium was held in 1983, the book does not appear outdated. However, the publishers' page includes a warning that the reader should confirm drug dosages because of changing medical practice. In summary, this book will be of interest to all anaesthetists who use opioids in their clinical practice and as a reference book for those seeking further information on a selected aspect of opioids and anaesthesia.

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How to edit a scientific journal

Claude T. Bishop. I.S.I. Press, Philadelphia 1984, \$14.95 us

This book will be of interest to both editors and authors. The title is unfortunate, in that it will tend to hide the fact that the book has a message not only for editors, but for all who operate within the sphere of a "scientific journal."

The author is the Editor-in-Chief of the National Research Council of Canada Research Journals. Dr. Bishop's objective, as stated in the Preface, is to fill the information gap for active scientists, whose main activity is research, when they are asked to act in the role of journal editor, associate editor or editorial board member.

Questions and issues addressed in the book include: Who should be an editor? Why be an editor? What are the functions of an editor? How should referees be selected? Ethical issues for authors, editors and referees. The mechanical functioning of the editorial office. Some aspects of the relationship between the editorial office and the printer.

In 132 pages of easy-to-read text, and with a

liberal supply of good humour, the author reviews these issues in nine chapters.

This book should be required reading for all editorial board members. It should also be of interest to all who contribute to scientific journals as authors. Editors and authors share the same goal – the effective communication of scientifically valid information. This book will serve as an important contribution to achieving this goal.

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Trauma and the anaesthetist

J.C. Stoddart. Bailliere Tindall, East Sussex, England, 1984. (W.B. Saunders Canada, Toronto) \$35.85

In this small text of 189 pages and eleven chapters, the author deals with what has become an increasingly important and demanding role for the anaesthetist. In many centres in both Europe and North America during the last decade the anaesthetist has become involved as either an important team member or in fact the team leader in dealing with the traumatized victim in both pre-hospital and hospital resuscitation and care. The scope of the anaesthetist's hospital care of these patients includes his work in the emergency department, the operating room and the intensive care unit. This text, which is sparsely illustrated and modestly referenced, is intended to provide knowledge in some depth on the care by the anaesthetist and to some extent by the Emergency Physician of the management of the most common traumatic entities, for example shock, upper airway and chest injuries, burns and coma.

The text is precise, clearly written and obviously is based upon the considerable knowledge of the author who is well versed and clinically involved in the injuries which he discusses. Furthermore, some of the chapters such as those of shock, the adult respiratory distress syndrome and the fat embolism syndrome are augmented by a discussion of the relevant pathophysiology as well as treatment. The material covered, although at times controversial, is by and large representative of accepted standards of emergency care, although the chapter "Trauma And

the Upper Airway" perhaps emphasizes the use of transcricothyroid catheter ventilation too heavily and out of proportion to its usefulness, particularly in the adult. It fails to describe the simple scalpel cricothyroidotomy but confines remarks on that form of securing the airway to a less common and more sophisticated cricothyroidotomy cannula.

The major and important deficiency of this text is in its apparent attempt to be too much to too many people in too small a volume. In attempting to provide information to specialists in anaesthesia and a lesser extent in emergency medicine which includes primary assessment of the injured patient, transportation of the injured patient and the pre-, intra-, and postoperative care of the injured patient from the anaesthetists' perspective, much of the material must consequently be dealt with in a moderately superficial manner.

Notwithstanding the above, however, there is much about this text to recommend it to at least the anaesthetist who deals with the victim of trauma.

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Recent advances in anaesthesia and analgesia, vol 15

Edited by R.S. Atkinson and A.P. Adams. Churchill Livingstone Publishers 1985, 231 pp. \$35.

The last volume in this series was published in 1982 and perhaps this accounts for the inclusion in this volume of many chapters which have nothing new to tell us in 1985. The book is a series of 12 monographs by different authors on topics which include isoflurane, high frequency ventilation of the lungs and morbidity and mortality in anaesthetic practice. I particularly enjoyed the chapters on atracurium and vecuronium, on synthetic analgesics and on calcium antagonists. I wonder why the chapters on spinal intradural analgesia and on the gastric acid problem were included. They had nothing new to offer. A chapter of clinical and biochemical aspects of malignant hyperpyrexia by F.R. Ellis and J.J.A. Heffron put together in one place all the current thoughts on this disease.

I am not sure at whom this book is directed. If it is to the practising anaesthetist, then I think he would find in it very little that is new. It provides nice reviews on some topics but these could just as easily, and much more cheaply, be found elsewhere. I would not recommend this book for a personal library.

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Critical care of the child

O. Prakash (Ed.), Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht, Holland

This well-produced book is a collection of papers presented at a Symposium on Applied Physiology in December 1983, and includes seventeen chapters written by experts in their fields. The majority of chapters relate to neonatal and foetal physiology, and others include such diverse and unrelated topics as "Reyes Syndrome" and "Physiology as applied to Pediatric Anesthesia."

The works presented are up-to-date; so up-to-date that in some cases the concepts expressed are experimental and have yet to be validated with extensive clinical experience. However, for those interested in the field of neonatal critical care they represent a useful discussion of areas of current concern.

Extensive coverage of surfactant mechanics (chapters authored by Jobe and Enhorning), nutrition (Swyer) and the development of the pulmonary circulation (Rabinovitch) are particularly well presented and well referenced.

Viewed as a series of monographs, this book can be highly recommended; however, its contents do not attempt to cover the material suggested by the title of the book, nor do any of the chapters relate to each other. The book is well produced and can be recommended as a library volume for those involved in neonatal care.

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MCQ tutor anaesthesia – second edition (1983)

A.W. Grogono, T.H. Howells, J.L. Seltzer, S. Mann. Heinemann Medical, \$14 US.

During anaesthesia training the physician must acquire knowledge, problem-solving ability, technical skills and attitudes. In some centres these are defined in objective terms. Certifying organisations usually employ a combination of methods for trainee evaluation and multiple choice question examinations are widely used to test knowledge and perhaps some problem-solving ability. This book is presented as a self-assessment exercise but considering the number of questions in the book, the number likely to be in official question banks, and the raw scores of candidates, I believe performance with this book of questions would be a poor predictor of success in the Canadian Fellowship examination.

The authors draw attention to the value of the M.C.Q. as a learning tool and certainly M.C.Q.s are used in this fashion. Many of the questions in this book do not seem to have been edited in the harsh fashion required of national examinations and to this reviewer their principal value as a learning experience would be for residents already knowledgeable, and familiar with the criteria by which questions are edited, to analyse and edit them. The comments on the correct answers to the questions are useful but rarely is there discussion of why a distractor is incorrect. This is just as valuable to the learner, as would be a literature reference to the information cited. The book is interesting but apparently written for the English training and evaluating system. The question design is inappropriate for this country. In summary this book could be misleading for undiscerning trainees in this country.

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