Book reviews

Respiratory physiology Ed. 3, 1985

John B. West. Williams & Wilkins, Baltimore MD.
\$17.00 (us)

This book gives an excellent overview of basic concepts in respiratory physiology. The information is clearly presented, illustrations are numerous, and major points are reinforced by a series of questions (with answers) at the back of the book. A wide range of topics is covered in 170 pages, with emphasis on concepts rather than detail. The text is cross referenced to West's companion paperback "Pulmonary Pathophysiology." This is an excellent teaching text; it reviews practical respiratory physiology in a pleasant and time efficient manner.

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Advanced techniques in resuscitation

Michael I. Greenberg, Mark D. Gerner & James R. Roberts. Williams & Wilkins, Baltimore MD.
\$21.95 (us)

This book is directed primarily at the emergency physician but contains much of interest to the anaesthetist.

Generally well written and thought out, it does contain some odd statements of concern to those interested in resuscitation, leading to a somewhat mixed impression.

The early chapters on initial resuscitation are quite well written reviews of more or less current thoughts on techniques of C.P.R. and medication administration during cardiac arrest and resuscitation. One might take issue with the statement that "the only reason to avoid high ventilation pressures during C.P.R. (is) fear of gastric insufflation." When pressures of 75–80 cm H₂O are involved, the various forms of pulmonary barotrauma would certainly give this reviewer pause, but this is a relatively modest objection.

Following a very good concise review of the

status of artificial blood and the antishock garment, the authors embark on the controversial subject of paediatric resuscitation and it is here that the anaesthetist, and perhaps the paediatrician, might differ from them in their apparent recommendations. Some of the statements are contradictory, e.g., "Any child can be adequately ventilated with a bag/mask even when suffering from severe croup or epiglottitis" (one of the few spelling errors in the book) contrasts with "Endotracheal intubation, of course, is the definitive method for securing the airway in paediatric resuscitation." Many experienced physicians would doubt the truth of the first statement and be even more sceptical of the recommendation that intubation of the patient with severe croup or epiglottitis be attempted by E.R. staff. These are often enough sick children whose life hangs, if not by a thread, then from a pinhole of an airway which is grossly distorted anatomically and among the severest challenges to the technical skills of even the most experienced laryngoscopist.

Generally, however, this is a good short update on its subject, easy to read and backed by reasonably up-to-date references. With its paperback format, it is probably cheap enough to recommend even to the most impecunious resident.

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Handbook of regional anesthesia

P. Prithvi Raj (Ed.) Churchill Livingstone, New York. (Academic Press Canada, Don Mills).
\$58.00

This book is one of several published as a result of the resurgence of interest in regional anaesthesia in recent years. Almost all of its 17 contributors are members of the faculty at the University of Cincinnati.

The presentation is different from the usual format, in that it approaches the subject more from

the perspective of the clinical anaesthetist. Rather than describing techniques of nerve blocks according to anatomical systems, the book discusses, in great detail, the rationale and choice of regional anaesthesia for various surgical procedures classified under surgical subspecialties, including a chapter on obstetrics. Indeed, this section covers 40 per cent of the book, and has no less than 13 contributors. The text is full of valuable practical information and sound advice on the management of patients under regional anaesthesia. It describes circumstances under which regional anaesthesia would be an attractive alternative, if not the anaesthetic technique of choice. Unfortunately, with this format, it is difficult to avoid overlapping and repetition.

One is surprised that no mention is made of the use of intraspinal narcotics in the discussion of the applicability and efficacy of regional techniques in the relief of postoperative and chronic pain.

The section devoted to the actual technique of nerve blocks occupies only one third of the book. Under each blocking technique, there is a brief review of anatomy, followed by a rather sketchy description of the technique. Illustrations are mostly line drawings, simple, and effective, but barely adequate. The management of the unsuccessful block and, to some extent, contraindications and complications discussed under each and every block are essentially the same and therefore unnecessarily repetitive. Intravenous regional anaesthesia is well covered, including pharmacokinetics and possible sites of action.

The chapter on adjuvant techniques dwells almost entirely on the use of peripheral nerve stimulators as an aid to locate nerve trunks. It contains some original works by the editor.

In conclusion, this is a good introduction to regional anaesthesia, and would undoubtedly stimulate interest among trainees. However, for those seeking to learn individual blocking techniques there are better books available.

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