Book Reviews

Anesthesia – 4th ed (CD Rom)

R. D. Miller (Ed.). Churchill Livingstone. 1995.
ISBN: 0-443-078106

The recent edition of Miller's *Anesthesia* was produced as part of a CD-ROM in 1995. It is available in Canada for \$525 (Canadian) and, for use on networks it is somewhat more. The CD is marketed as CCEL or Churchill's Continuing Electronic Library and is made up of both core and supplementary information. The core contains: (a) The full content of the '94 Fourth Edition of *Anesthesia*. (b) CCEL Medline which contains the majority of records for research articles cited in Miller (16,000 links to some 10,000 separate Medline records) as well as all Medline records for the top 20 *Anesthesia*-related journals for the past five years. (c) CCEL Quick Start which is an effective and easy to understand tutorial. (d) CCEL Help which is a user friendly reference to features available on the disc. (e) CCEL Rights Browser which makes it possible to unlock the supplementary material. One of the locked titles on the first disc is *Physicians GenRx* which is an unbiased drug reference covering all FDA approved prescription drugs available in the USA today. The CCEL is kept current by twice yearly update CD's at a cost of more than Can. \$250 per year. Each time supplementary information is unlocked a further cost is incurred. The *Physicians GenRx* is \$150 Canadian.

The minimum computer specifications require an Intel compatible 386 and 4 megabytes of RAM with Windows running as well as a CD ROM drive and Microsoft extensions. In '96 it would be hard to find equipment that is not capable of running this application. The tutorial is easy to understand and facilitates use of the straightforward, intuitive software. There are several search methods that find text as well as references. These are thorough and easy to use. The text can be "opened" either via a single click on a "Contents" button with a well arranged set of hierarchical headings or by clicking on a "Query" search button. Tables and figures are accessible in separate windows with a double click of the mouse. These can be sized to suit the reader. All images are static and there is no video or multimedia. Printing from the screen is uncomplicated.

Essentially, this CD-ROM is an efficient method of transposing the written word to the screen. It has the advantage of including many references and abstracts to the recent *Anesthesia* literature. It also has a search machine that is more efficient and faster than text based methods. The disc is a compact way of storing a lot of information in a readily retrievable format.

The computer is a multifaceted tool. Among other things, it lends itself to teaching and information transfer via interactive programs, multimedia and virtual reality. Unfortunately, this rendition of Miller does not capitalize on the possibilities provided by new technology but persists in using the computer to display text on screen. It is hoped that a more adventurous approach to providing the information contained in Miller will be attempted in a future edition.

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Mosby's Anesthesia CD-ROM

Times Mirror Professional Publishing. 130 Flaska Drive,
Markum, Ontario, L6G-1B8. Telephone 1-800-268-4178.
ISBN 0815163630 \$461.95 CDN

This work is a compilation of 5 anaesthesia volumes onto a single CD-ROM in both Windows and Macintosh formats. The following well-known Mosby published volumes are included, with information retrieval based on the Folio Infobase system of electronic library management.

Anesthesia and Perioperative Complications. Edited by Jonathan L. Benumof, M.D. and Lawrence J. Saidman, M.D. (49 contributors; 188 illustrations).

Anesthesia Equipment: Principles and Applications. By Jan Ehrenwerth, M.D. and James B. Eisenkraft, M.D. (655 illustrations).

Practical Management of Pain – Second Edition. By P. Prithvi Raj, M.B.B.S. (519 illustrations).

Principles and Practice of Anesthesiology. By Mark C. Rogers, M.D., John H. Tinker, M.D., Benjamin G. Covino, Ph.D., M.D., and David E. Longnecker, M.D. (1060 illustrations).

1994 Anesthesia Year Book. Editor-in-Chief: John H. Tinker, M.D.

Obviously, this CD-ROM contains an enormous amount of information on practically all anaesthesia topics. In this sense it can be thought of as a digital reference book series, designed for quick reference rather than for exhaustive study for studying for examinations. Nevertheless, material can be printed out for reading on the subway or in bed.

The material is well-organized and well-illustrated, just like the original paper versions of the books. References were easily found by clicking on the reference citations, a much easier way than in dealing with a paper book.

The system is much more than just five books on one CD-ROM. The Folio Infobase software supports features such as bookmarks, text highlighting, notes tagged to paragraphs, advanced searching, cut and paste capability, and printing to disk in a variety of word processor formats. With regard to the latter, support is provided for WordPerfect 5.X and 6.0 formats, as well as Word for DOS 5.5, Rich Text Format and ordinary ASCII. While there is also support for release 2.0 of Word for Windows, none is offered for release 6.0 and the Windows 95 release.

I found the software easy to install and use on both a slow 486/33 PC and more powerful machines. I did not test the Macintosh features of the CD-ROM; nor did I test the Windows version under Windows 95.

I identified a number of minor drawbacks with the CD-ROM. There are occasional spelling errors ("Principals and Practice of Anesthesiology") and formatting problems suggestive of some haste in preparing the material. The Folio software used could also be updated. For example, as mentioned, the "export to word processor" supports Word for Windows version 2.0 but not the more recent 6.0 and Windows 95 releases (although this is not a serious problem in that both

these releases import version 2.0 files). I also initially had trouble with the text highlight and bookmark features (not that I ever would have used them) because of the need to create a "shadow file", a fact readily determined by reading the paper information provided, but not obvious just from running the program. Finally, searches do not cross book boundaries, so that a search is always restricted to the particular book that is active at the moment.

I would recommend this CD-ROM for any anaesthesia department library.

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MCQs in Anaesthesiology

Ann Black, Andrea Kelleher. Kluwer Academic Publishing Group. 1994. 92 pages. \$14.50 (US). ISBN: 0-7923-8854-2

This British book is a collection of multiple choice questions (MCQs) similar to those on the Fellowship exams of the Royal College of Anaesthetists. The forward to this small volume explains that it is designed to familiarize candidates with the MCQ format; many British universities and medical schools have abandoned MCQs as assessment tools, resulting in more candidates arriving at the RCA exams without previous MCQ experience. The same phenomenon may be occurring in Canada, with less reliance on MCQs throughout undergraduate and medical school courses.

This focus, however, does give quite a narrow aim to the book, and it appears to suffer from a lack of purpose. It consists of 200 MCQs, arranged in eight groups under the broad subject headings of anaesthesia (70 MCQs), anatomy (10 questions), and medicine, surgery, clinical measurement, physiology, pharmacology, and equipment, each with 20 questions. The answers to each group of questions are at the end of each section; they are very brief, do not develop the topic in any detail and are not referenced.

A problem for Canadians who might consider using the book is that the format of the MCQs in the book is different from that on the Royal College of Physicians of Canada examination in Anaesthesia. On the Canadian written examination, all questions have one "right" answer. *MCQs in Anaesthesiology*, however, lists five possible answers, of which any combination from zero to five may be correct. It does not provide Canadian candidates with a valid introduction to the type of MCQs they will have to conquer come September.

It is difficult to decide if the authors and publisher wished to use the MCQs to prompt the search for knowledge of Anaesthesia, or just to present the types of questions likely to be encountered. From the Canadian viewpoint, many of the questions, especially in the medicine and surgery sections tended to be geared to specialists in those areas, rather than to Anaesthetists. Perhaps this reflects the type of knowledge expected of specialist Anaesthetists in Britain, but certainly does not represent the body of knowledge with which our College feels we should be proficient.

There are a number of texts available that serve as prompts to studying for either the Royal College Fellowship examination in Anaesthesia or the American Board exams in Anesthesiology. Some of these are written in the MCQ format, are more typical of the questions asked on the Fellowship exams in Canada, both in style and content, and also provide the added function of initiating further learning with either ref-

erences or suggested texts to read. I do not think *MCQs in Anaesthesiology* will add to the preparation for specialty qualification of Canadian candidates.

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Neuroanaesthetic Practice

H. Van Aken (Ed.). BMJ Publishing Group. 1995.
307 pages. £33.00. ISBN: 0 7279 0909 6

This book is from the series of "Fundamentals of Anaesthesia and Acute Medicine." The aim of the series is to update the reader on principles of clinical topics with an emphasis on recent developments. This soft covered book, dealing with the subspecialty of neuroanaesthesia, is written by many international authors. Overall, the book does achieve its purpose. Most chapters are well written, easy to read, contain many good illustrations, tables and pictures, and have appropriate references.

The book is divided into eleven chapters, each written by different authors. Generally there is only minimal repetition of topics, mostly in chapter two. The title of chapter two is somewhat misleading. This chapter covers a wide range of topics but not all necessarily related to the intensive care management of patients, however does contain a good review of pathological disorders of the central nervous system. Some areas that are lacking from this book include a discussion of motor evoked potentials and cerebrovascular procedures such as carotid endarterectomy.

This book can be recommended to anaesthesia trainees for an introduction to neuroanaesthesia as well as to the practicing anaesthetists and neuroanaesthetist for a quick review or update in many areas of neuroanaesthesia.

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Pneumopathie nosocomiale et ventilation artificielle

J. Chastre, J.-Y. Fagon (Eds.). Edition Masson. 1995.
166 pages. ISBN: 2-225-84882-3

Soulignons d'abord le caractère résolument médical de cet ouvrage. En effet, bien que les chapitres traitant de l'épidémiologie et de la physiopathologie des pneumopathies associées à la ventilation mécanique et à l'intubation endotrachéale soient en mesure d'intéresser tous les membres de la communauté anesthésique, ce volume se veut surtout une référence pour ceux d'entre nous qui oeuvrent dans les unités de soins intensifs. Notons l'excellent travail des directeurs et des auteurs quant à la division des chapitres. En effet, le travail présente une revue structurée du sujet tout en évitant les redondances inutiles. Les pneumopathies nosocomiales associées à la ventilation artificielle constituent un problème précis et c'est de façon spécifique qu'il est traité. Les chapitres traitant des options diagnostiques sont bien conçus. Les controverses qui entourent le recours aux prélèvements obtenus par fibroscopie (brosse télescopique protégée et lavage broncho-alvéolaire) ou par des moyens moins sophistiqués (aspiration trachéale et prélèvement distal protégé) sont traitées avec la rigueur nécessaire. Les sections concernant la prise en charge des malades ainsi que les options thérapeutiques sont de haut niveau. Le chapitre concernant le choix des antibiotiques est à

souligner car en plus de présenter les alternatives de façon concise, on y suggère les éléments d'une démarche claire face aux problèmes cliniques. Les incertitudes qui entourent la décontamination digestive sélective sont convenablement exprimées. En résumé, bien que susceptible de n'intéresser qu'une minorité d'anesthésistes, ce volume à caractère spécialisé est remarquablement bien conçu.

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