Book reviews

Essays on the first hundred years of anaesthesia, Volume III

W. Stanley Sykes. Richard H. Ellis (Editor). Wood Library – Museum of Anesthesiology, Parkridge, Illinois. 1982. \$25.00 us (Complete Set, Volumes I, II, III, \$60.00 us)

The long-awaited third volume of *The Essays on the First Hundred Years of Anesthesia* is now available, thanks to the Wood Library Museum of the American Society of Anesthesiologists and the editor, Dr. Richard H. Ellis of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London, England. Volumes I and II of the essays have also been reprinted, and are available along with Volume III as a complete set. (Volume III is also available separately).

Since their original publication in the early 1960's, Dr. Sykes' essays have achieved the status of classics. Work on Volume III was in progress at the time of Dr. Sykes' death, and the material was in the form of an extensive collection of notes. Dr. Ellis undertook the difficult task of completing the third volume. All three volumes of the essays are mandatory reading for anyone interested in the History of Anesthesia.

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about the pharmacology of anaesthetic agents, anaesthetic care in the operating room, anaesthetic practice outside the operating room and drug abuse in the medical profession. Most of the contributors were from the Departments of Anesthesiology of the University of California. Many are recognized experts in their fields.

The extent to which this book's contents meet the "really new" objective varies considerably from chapter to chapter. Portions of certain chapters broach true frontiers, most notably those that deal with muscle relaxants, local anaesthetics, preoperative preparation and the future of clinical anaesthesia. Other chapters present a rather parochial view of what is new. Still others contain virtually nothing that could be considered new and important in 1982. Much of the material appearing in this book is reasonably established knowledge. Therefore, the title of the book seems somewhat inappropriate.

Nevertheless, this book is topical. It addresses a wide range of issues of current interest to practicing anaesthetists. Although individual presentations are far from comprehensive, all are informative in some detail and most are authoritative. The book has been well edited and is quite readable.

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Clinical frontiers in anesthesiology

Edited by Jonathon L. Benumof. Grune and Stratton, Inc. New York, 1983, \$28.50 us

This book, a part of the Anesthesia Update series, arose from the proceedings of a postgraduate meeting on "What is Really New" in clinical anaesthesiology, conducted by the Anesthesia Department of the University of California, San Diego, in January 1982. The 22 chapters are based upon 19 presentations and three panel discussions

New anesthetic agents, devices and monitoring techniques

Edited by: T.H. Stanley, W.C. Petty. Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, The Hague, 1983, \$35.00 us

This book is the fifth volume of *Developments in Critical Care Medicine and Anaesthesiology* and is a collection of the papers presented at the Annual Utah Postgraduate Course in Anesthesiology 1983. Topics covered range from the everyday, "Anes-

thetia for Cesarean Section: regional and general," to the esoteric, "Electrostimulation as an adjunct to anesthesia." The front cover lists two editors, although I am unable to find much evidence of any editorial effort. As far as presentation is concerned, there are spelling and grammatical mistakes, reference numbers are incorrectly cited in the text, type styles vary from small, black and crowded to pale, blotchy and large, and some presentations appear to be typed versions of the speakers' slides while others are full written transcripts. It would appear that the book is merely a binding together of the speakers' notes. In defence, production time of the book was only one month.

With respect to content, the back cover of the book states that "(s)pecific emphasis is placed on new developments ..." and it is "a body of material on anesthesia not currently available in any other form or from any other source." Unfortunately this is not quite true: some of the papers presented are to be found, word-for-word, in other publications, from previous years. Other chapters, however, do present new material in a concise and well-written fashion, especially those by Gibbs ("Anaesthetic management of the high risk pregnant patient: preeclampsia and diabetes"), Reves (Calcium channel blockers and anesthesia"), Smith ("Buying a monitor"), and Tinker ("Comparisons between beta blockers and calcium entry blockers"). But readers will have to judge if this slim green volume is current enough, at a cost of \$35 US for 26 presentations, in comparison to the ASA Annual Refresher Course Lectures, which in 1983 contained 86 papers and cost considerably less.

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induce sleep from antiquity to the Renaissance the author takes us through mesmerism and Hickman's carbon dioxide narcosis to the birth of true general anaesthesia. Each section has a short introduction followed by facsimile reprints of the original writings. We find nitrous oxide used as laughing gas and ether for ether frolics before these agents were recognized as general anaesthetics. There are medical journal articles, newspaper reports, letters and affidavits relating to Wells, Morton, Jackson and Crawford Long. These include not only their contributions with the two agents but also their rivalry as to who really discovered anaesthesia. Early reports of ether use in Great Britain include its trial in a sheep and a horse after several weeks of safe use in humans! The final chapter covers the introduction of chloroform in Edinburgh and includes Simpson's brilliant and scholarly "Answer to the Religious Objections Advanced Against the Employment of Anesthetic Agents in Midwifery and Surgery." This is a reply, religiously argued, to a vocal minority who, also for religious reasons, objected to the use of one of the greatest discoveries in medical history.

One warning, however. The pages are not numbered consecutively nor is there an index. Great patience is needed in finding particular articles. However, there is a full list of the reprinted papers at the back of the book, followed by 21 further primary sources and 80 secondary references.

This volume is beautifully bound in blue leather with 22-karat gold lettering. Considering the quality of finish and the inaccessibility of most of the writings it represents excellent value for money.

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The origins of anesthesia

Sherwin B. Nuland. Leslie B. Adams, The Classics of Medicine Library, Birmingham, Alabama, 776 pp, 1983, \$60.00 US

This volume from the Classics of Medicine Library is the first to be devoted to anaesthesia. After two brief chapters covering attempts to subdue pain and