Book Reviews

Oxford Textbook of Critical Care

Andrew R. Webb, Marc J. Shapiro, Mervyn Singer, Peter Suter (Eds.). Oxford Medical Publications, 1999. \$317.95. 1400 pages. ISBN 0-19-262737-6

This new textbook of Critical Care Medicine is an international text with editors from three countries and 450 authors from 20 countries. It is truly an important new reference and educational text in the field of Critical Care Medicine. The book is unique in two ways: 1) The text abandons the traditional chapter layout in favour of a systems-based approach to clinical problems. Each section of the book consists of short topics grouped within the section according to a clinical problem, allowing the practitioner to update on a specific clinical problem experienced at the bedside. The individual topics were limited by the editors to 2000-3000 words, resulting in clear and focused contributions by the individual authors. 2) The book is written and organized in well-structured manner with a CD-ROM version in mind. Although the reviewer did not have the opportunity to review the operation of the CD-ROM version, the editors state that "the layout of the will facilitate printing of searches from the CD-ROM version".

The scope of the book covers most clinical topics in critical care, but also addresses important areas such as medical ethics, equipment, management of a critical care department, financial issues, and research in critical care. There is also an excellent section that summarizes currently used scoring systems in critical care medicine. As with any text that attempts to succinctly present material on complex topics, at times the discussions can be superficial e.g. in the section discussing intubation and mechanical ventilation in status asthmaticus, there is little discussion of the hazards of intubating this population and no discussion of the role of non-invasive ventilation. However, considering the text as a whole, it is indeed one that should be added to the library of critical care departments. The format of the book makes it an excellent text for students studying for critical care examinations. The vision of creating a CD-ROM version is commendable and will ensure that this reference becomes one of most used in its the field.

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Management of Acute and Chronic Pain

N. Rawal (Ed.). BMJ Books, 1998. 231 pages. £25.00. ISBN 0-7279-1193-7

This book is one of the titles in the Fundamentals of Anaesthesia and Acute Medicine Series, which aims "to bring to the reader up to date and authoritative reviews of the principal clinical topics which make up the specialties".

The 231 page text is divided into eight chapters written by 11 authors from Europe and the USA. The first chapter gives an up to date overview about pain mechanisms. The second chapter deals with the pharmacology of pain; unfortunately drugs like ketamine or clonidine are not mentioned. The next three chapters cover the field of acute pain in adults, obstetrics and children. Especially, the chapters on obstetric pain (chapter 4) and on pain in children (chapter 5) give the reader practical information. It has to be noted that the dose recommendations given by the authors are those used in their practice and alternative doses or dosing schedules are hardly discussed. The chapter on acute pain in adults (chapter 3) is more descriptive and gives an overview on the available methods for the control of postoperative pain.

The last three chapters are supposed to cover the subject of management of chronic pain. Only chronic low back pain (chapter 6), cancer pain (chapter 7) and interventional techniques (chapter 8) are discussed. Chronic pain syndromes such as phantom pain, whiplash, cervico-brachialgia, trigeminal neuralgia, atypical facial pain, postherpetic neuralgia and Complex Regional Pain Syndrome are not or hardly mentioned and for this part of the book the title certainly isn't appropriate.

There is considerable overlap between different chapters in the discussion of the effects of opioids; chapters 2, 3, 5 and 7 all have a paragraph on this subject. Furthermore, there are some disturbing spelling errors; giving 5-10 mg of sufentanil epidurally is not recommended (page 95)!

To conclude, the physician who wants to know more about the management of acute pain will find useful information in this book. The physician who wants to be introduced in the broad field of chronic pain would be better off buying a book which deals specifically with chronic pain.

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Clinical Application of the Intra-Aortic Balloon Pump, 3rd ed.

H. Bolooki. Futura Publishing Company, Inc., 1998.
470 pages. \$98.00 (US) ISBN 0-87993-401-8

This book presents a comprehensive and up to date review of the use of the intra-aortic balloon pump (IABP). Written by a cardiac surgeon, the book describes the use of the IABP in both medical and surgical settings. It is a single authored text, in which the author relies heavily on his considerable experience with the IABP over many years. This is good in that there is little repetition from chapter to chapter. A great deal of what the author says is backed by peer reviewed literature. However, some of his statements and conclusions represent his experience and beliefs which have not been published. Since he is the sole author we do not have alternative points of view.

The book is broken down into sections which follow a logical progression. Dr. Bolooki opens with an over-view of the assisted circulation, and follows with sections on cardiac function and pathophysiology of heart failure, the intra-aortic balloon pump itself, management of patients managed with IABP, and the indications for the use of the IABP. His style is very readable, which makes the high factual content surprisingly easy to digest. The sections on balloon pump equipment, consoles and catheters, and the physiology of balloon pumping are particularly good, and perhaps should be mandatory reading for all trainees in cardiac surgery, cardiac anesthesia, invasive cardiology and clinical perfusion. The author reviews the equipment which is available in North America in a fair and unbiased way, pointing out strengths and weaknesses.

The book suffers when Dr. Bolooki leaves the IABP and discusses the pharmacological and intensive care management of patients while receiving IABP therapy. Here his approach is "cook-bookish". Complicated issues such as colloid *vs* crystalloid therapy, use and choice of inotropes and vasodilators are dealt with summarily in a line or two. His approach represents his considerable experience. However, the reader should realize that there is a wealth of literature available with other points of view.

For those who are looking for an introduction to the IABP, or a "How to" manual for solving basic problems with timing or inflation this is not the book to buy. It is not a technical manual. It is aimed at an audience which is already familiar with this form of circulatory support. It is a worthwhile addition to the

library of a busy cardiovascular critical care unit in which IABPs are used frequently, and is a good reference text for any one who is considering research involving the IABP.

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