Book & New Media Reviews

Spinal and Epidural Anesthesia

Cynthia A. Wong. McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 2006. 374 pages, 60 illustrations, ISBN 13; 978-0-07-143772-1; ISBN 10; 0-07-143772-X

This textbook is a comprehensive compilation of up-to-date information as applied to neuraxial anesthesia and is the first textbook which is devoted exclusively to spinal and epidural anesthesia. The author addresses major topics covered in neuraxial anesthesia chapters within both major anesthesiology text books and in textbooks of regional anesthesia and pain management in a concise and authoritative manner.

The book is a practical “how to” guide to spinal and epidural anesthesia. The first six chapters include discussions of vertebral anatomy, neuraxial block technique, pharmacology of drugs, physiologic changes, contraindications and complications. The remainder outlines the utility of the techniques for various surgical, obstetrical and pediatric applications as well as for postoperative pain management and chronic pain management.

Each chapter is independent, and as such, some duplication of discussion occurs which is pertinent to all chapters. A great deal of effort was made to make clear the theory behind the practice. Special mention must be made to congratulate the author on inclusion of clinical “pearls” which arise in discussion of specific applications of epidural and spinal anesthesia.

The author has included specific discussion of patient and medication safety issues important to practitioners. In addition, there is a review of equipment used for spinal, epidural, caudal and combined spinal-epidural techniques.

This book is well written, concise, and well referenced. It includes numerous summary tables and illustrations, and integrates theory and practice. Above all, it is extremely practical. I would agree with the review on the jacket cover which states: “this book is a complete hands-on guide to today’s spinal and epidural anesthesia practice”. It is valuable not only for trainees in anesthesiology, but is a good reference for established anesthesiologists who use these techniques in their clinical practice.

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Transesophageal Echocardiography Multimedia Manual. A Perioperative Transdisciplinary Approach

André Y. Denault, Pierre Couture, Jean Buithieu, Jean-Claude Tardif (Editors). Informa Healthcare USA, Inc. New York, NY, 2007. Hardcover, 581 pages. ISBN 0-8247-2353-8

Cardiac anaesthesiologists have been routinely using transesophageal echocardiography (TEE) in the operating room and cardiac intensive care unit for a number of years. Despite the cumulative clinical and research experience, until recently both perioperative and TEE were usually confined to small chapters towards the end of general cardiology textbooks. Although there are now many books specifically targeting TEE, this book is a welcome addition to the few targeting the perioperative physician.

The contributing authors were requested to align the content within each chapter according to the objectives of the National Board of Echocardiography. This resulted in a book that logically progresses from basic principles of ultrasonography and cardiac anatomy to the challenging assessment of congenital heart disease. Each chapter is subdivided into small sections that are easy to read and include numerous figures, tables and references.

The first chapters concentrate on the principles of ultrasonography, Doppler, artefacts and equipment. The reader is gradually introduced to the key concepts that are required to complete and interpret a TEE examination. The chapters on ventricular function clearly demonstrate how to use different ultrasound modalities to assess systolic and diastolic function. Mitral and aortic valve assessment is discussed in detail, with an interesting section that describes the surgical techniques used in mitral valve repair. The book dedicates two chapters to cardiac cannulation for bypass and circulatory assistance helping to define its practical perioperative focus, although the applications of TEE for minimally invasive procedures such as endovascular stenting and valve replacement are not reviewed.

Despite the ongoing improvement in ultrasound technology there is no easy way to learn how to perform an echocardiographic examination. One of the greatest challenges for the learner is to navigate

around a 3D heart using 2D images. To help address this challenge, the book uses a system of small icons alongside ultrasound images to help identify the related anatomy and demonstrate the ultrasound plane. Videos of these images are available on the accompanying multimedia DVD together with photographs, tables and video clips of surgical procedures.

In essence, this is a well-organized and easy to read textbook which is an important addition to the field. It is particularly suitable for Cardiac Anesthesia Fellows who are learning how to perform TEE and are looking for a text that will take them from basic principles through to Board Certification. My only request would be that the DVD format is changed to facilitate its operation on Apple computers.

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In contrast to the case of scientific publication, formal peer-review of educational resources remains uncommon. Historically, this is likely because until recently, publishing educational resources such as books was usually done in conjunction with a publishing house with its own internal quality control system. With the rise of the Internet, the landscape has changed, and publishing no longer requires enormous expense and the cooperation of a publishing house. With academic credit now being granted to individuals who produce freely downloadable peer-reviewed educational material such as that offered by HEAL, the volume and quality of such resources is bound to increase over time.

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