Book & New Media Reviews

Wall and Melzack's Textbook of Pain, 5th Edition
Stephen B. McMahon, Martin Koltzenburg (Eds).
 Elsevier Churchill Livingstone, 2005. \$397. 1239 pages. ISBN 0443072876

There is perhaps no area of anesthesiology in which good textbooks are more needed than in the study of pain and its treatment. This iteration of one of the two standards in the field does the new editors great credit. It is comprehensive, readable and beautifully illustrated. The input of about 100 worldwide contributors has been meticulously coordinated. The basic science student will find all important extant knowledge about the structural and functional aspects of the pain experience laid out in easily digestible chapters. While the clinical trainee will find this to be a good resource for reading around new cases, the clinical chapters are weaker than the scientific ones. The admonition to use immobilization as part of the primary treatment of complex regional pain syndrome for example, will raise eyebrows, even coming as it does from an acknowledged expert in the area. An obstetric anesthesiologist will find little of interest in the chapter devoted to this specialty. Chronic pelvic pain is reviewed somewhat superficially in just three paragraphs, and perioperative patient-controlled analgesia and radiofrequency neurotomy are hardly mentioned at all.

An exciting additional feature of this latest addition is access to the online version of the full text and illustrations. The editors promise regular updating, and two or three updates have been posted each month since the book's publication. However, discussion of what I chose as a sentinel topic (the use of COX-2 inhibitors in cardiovascular disease) is out of date in the print version, and has yet to be updated online.

Despite the few limitations, this latest edition of Wall and Melzack's Textbook of Pain is an excellent text, which should find its way onto the bookshelves of all places where pain is studied and treated.

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Anesthesia and Uncommon Diseases, 5th Edition
Lee A. Fleisher. Saunders, 2006. 672 pages, 145 illustrations. \$180 Can. ISBN 1-4160-2212-0

This is the fifth edition of *Anesthesia and Uncommon Diseases* and is edited by Lee A. Fleisher, MD. This textbook has been required reading in anesthesia training and an essential reference textbook for practicing anesthesiologists since the first edition was published in 1973. The fifth edition will no doubt continue this tradition.

A striking change in this edition is its new format and presentation. Many useful tables and illustrations have been added to compliment the information provided in each of the 21 chapters. A broad spectrum of anesthesia related topics as well as critical care, trauma, bioterrorism, and herbal medicines are included. The new chapter on congenital heart disease is a very useful addition. Several chapters include a helpful review of physiology and pathophysiology.

The authors have skilfully integrated basic anesthesia principles into the anesthesia management of complex uncommon diseases. The management of many uncommon diseases is based on important concerns published in the anesthesia literature. The authors highlight particular anesthesia techniques that are controversial or lack any evidenced-based medicine to support the recommendations.

This textbook provides important information for anesthesia choices that will need to be made when encountering patients that fall outside normal day to day anesthesia practice. The overall outline, extensive index, multiple tables and superb illustrations allow for rapid access to information that will provide a guide to optimal care of these patients.

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