A Practical Approach to Obstetric Anesthesia

Brenda A. Bucklin, David R. Gambling, David J. Wlody (eds). Lippincott Williams and Wilkins, Philadelphia, PA, 2009, 546 pp, ISBN 10:0-7817-7524-8

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The editors strive to position their new book in the "Practical Approach" series from Lippincott Williams and Wilkins as a user-friendly reference in obstetrical anesthesia. The book has relevance as a source for quick reference in day-to-day practice, as it is easy to navigate from the Table of Contents through to the appropriate chapter. In addition, a list of key topics at the beginning of each chapter guides the reader directly to the relevant page and the pertinent paragraph.

The editors have brought together a strong group of North American authors, including several prominent Canadians, and, on the whole, the chapters address all major issues in obstetrical anesthesia in a concise, yet complete, manner and at a level which is very useful for supporting clinical practice. The book is also helpful for practitioners to put together spontaneous bedside lessons for students and residents.

A reader would expect a book with different authors for each chapter to show some variations in both depth and style. However, despite the editors' obvious efforts to achieve consistency of style and content, some chapters meet their goals better than others. For example, there is a concise discussion in one chapter regarding the issues surrounding neuraxial anesthesia for the febrile parturient. In contrast, the section regarding systemic opioid analgesia

for labor includes summaries for only a few publications pertaining to each opioid agent and does not provide practical information for effective patient-controlled analgesia (PCA) dosing regimens. This inconsistency of detail seems to fall short of the editors' intent. The otherwise comprehensive chapter regarding amniotic fluid embolism includes advice on aggressive fluid resuscitation, but the chapter does not include acknowledgment of the controversy surrounding this advice or its potential impact on acute right ventricular dilation with possible impairment of left ventricular filling. On the other hand, the chapter on postdural puncture headache features an excellent review of the current knowledge on the topic as well as helpful comments from the author. The final chapter incorporates summaries of guidelines from relevant American (only) specialty organizations, which are helpful not only for quick review but also for informing the reader of the sources of such documents. Such guidelines are continually increasing in number and quite frequently undergo revisions and updates.

In summary, despite some of the aforementioned limitations, *A Practical Approach to Obstetric Anesthesia* provides a good information source for use by practitioners and teachers of obstetrical anesthesia.

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