The EACTA Lecture Series of Perioperative Echocardiography - Accreditation Course - Advanced Course

David Duthie, Justiaan Swanevelder (editors). European Association of Cardiothoracic Anaesthesiologists. European Association of Echocardiography, a registered branch of the European Society of Cardiology (ESC). www.eacta.org

Alain Deschamps, MD, PhD

Published online: 27 May 2011
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This lectures series from the European Association of Cardiothoracic Anesthesiologists consists of two DVDs which are endorsed by the European Association of Echocardiography. Each lecture (18 on basic perioperative echocardiography and 18 on advanced subjects) lasts approximately 30 min, hence the entire series spans more than 18 hr of viewing, clearly not to be attempted in one sitting. The format is organized much like a lecture which alternates between a presenter speaking at a microphone and a presentation of slides in full video screen view.

Technically, the production is high-quality; the images are clear, and the sound is of better quality than would normally be expected from a lecture recording. The DVDs can be played equally well on a Windows or McIntosh platform. The menu is simple and easy to follow. The size of the video screen is quite small, however, and it is much easier to follow the lectures on a TV screen or projector than on a computer screen. The viewer can go back and forth at will within lectures, and the possibility to download the entire DVD directly onto the computer hard drive facilitates the speed of these transitions. The quality of the images is generally good, but not standardized throughout the presentations. Consequently, some of the slides are overly crowded, and no adjustments were made to complete the slides with indicators that would follow the pointer in the presenter's hand. Some presenters use still images when loops would have been superior, and a few of the presenters use considerable amounts of text when images would have been preferable. Often the presenter will say, "...as you can see", while no image appears to enlighten the viewer. This is a European course and may

require becoming familiarized with the English accent of some of the presenters, although this never lessens the understanding of the subjects presented.

The content of the presentations in the Accreditation section (DVD1) of the lecture series varies from good-quality to high-quality, and the fundamental information provided is pertinent to the American Board of Perioperative Echocardiography examination and comparable with the American counterpart of this course. The content in the Advanced section (DVD2) of the lecture series is extensive. It covers the majority of ambiguous intraoperative situations that require making decisions regarding new and unexpected echocardiography findings. It also covers use of most of the new intraoperative modalities, such as 3D echocardiography and updates in diastology, including tissue tracking as well as percutaneous and transapical aortic valve replacement. There is even a section on rapid echocardiographic assessment in the intensive care unit. The reference list on these subjects is extensive.

The DVDs come with a mock examination which includes both a practical and a theoretical part, and the answers to the questions are referenced. The quality of the loops in the mock examination is acceptable and differs little from what is seen in the examination of the American Board of Perioperative Echocardiography. The usual pitfalls are present, such as too short a loop, some ambiguous images and multiple choices, and pathological diagnostics in the multiple choices (impossible to make by echocardiography). The format of this examination is comparable to the format of the examination for the American Board of Perioperative Echocardiography certification. However, it is not intended as an exhaustive practice for the Board examination; only examples of possible questions in the Board certification examination are shown. Also, the video format of the mock examination is fixed and does not allow

A. Deschamps, MD, PhD (✉)
Montreal Heart Institute, Montreal, QC, Canada
e-mail: a.deschamps@umontreal.ca

skipping to the next question. A considerable amount of time can be lost waiting for the questions to proceed.

These lectures offer beginners a good overview of the basic material to cover in preparation for the Board examination. However, the DVDs cannot replace the benefit of being able to interact with the presenters to clarify some of the more difficult subjects in this field. For those with more experience with perioperative echocardiography, the Accreditation section (DVD1) offers a good review, and the Advanced section (DVD2) covers enough

interesting material to keep the viewer's attention. The quality of these DVDs is high enough to justify the price of 100 euros, especially if the purchaser is looking for a quick and effective way to review this material. Most improvements could be made in the editing and standardization of the presentations, but this is with the understanding that the cost of production would increase substantially.

Competing interests None declared.