Textbook of Critical Care, 6th Edition

Jean-Louis Vincent, Edward Abraham, Patrick Kochanek, Frederick A. Moore, Mitchell P. Fink. Saunders, 2011, 1,744 pages. ISBN 978-1-4377-1367-1

Lauralyn McIntyre, MD · Amanda Roze des Orleans, MD

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Textbook of Critical Care, 6th Edition offers updated material and a revised format of the previous edition of the text published in 2005. The editorial team continues as previously, with the addition of Frederick A. Moore, and there remains an international consortium of contributing authors dominated by North American and European experience.

The book consists of 228 chapters divided into 14 sections. The “Procedures” Section, previously included in the printed textbook, is still available with each copy of the textbook but only in a password protected electronic format through the integrated online library, *Expert Consult*. In addition to procedural topics and corresponding videos, the online access offers an extended list of references as well as various calculators. Restricting some content to an online format is an effort to reduce the bulk and cost of the textbook, and according to an e-mail communication with primary author, J. L. Vincent, this online access to references will remain available when subsequent editions are published.

Chapters previously contained within a separate “Basic Science” Section have been redistributed and integrated into the respective sections based on organ systems, which reminds readers that clinical practice is grounded on a solid understanding of pathophysiology. Six new chapters have been added, including “Biochemical or Electrocardiographic Evidence of Acute Myocardial Injury”; “Intensive Care after Neurosurgery”; “Selective Digestive Decontamination”; “Cocaine, Methamphetamines, Ecstasy and Other Street Drugs”; and “Conversations with Families of Critically Ill Patients”.

By incorporating colour in its headings, tables, and graphics, the textbook gains visual appeal while retaining clarity of presentation. The tables are well-organized and summative without being repetitive, while figures with imaging studies, illustrations, and algorithms complement the accompanying text. The content is both evidence-based and well-referenced; relevant literature sources are cited from both past and present, and a number of the references are provided in annotated format. In view of the considerable concentration of information presented for each topic, highlighting the key points at the end of most chapters provides an excellent summary of the important main messages.

While it is not possible to appraise each chapter in this review, to provide additional perspective on the content of the textbook, we have chosen several core topics on which to comment further. Chapter 58, “Acute Lung Injury and Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome” is a summary of an extensive body of research on acute lung injury (ALI) and acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS). The authors have provided a succinct overview of the epidemiology, pathophysiology, diagnosis, clinical course, management, and prognosis of patients with ALI and ARDS. They have provided a balanced discussion of current controversies and areas of uncertainty as well as mention of ongoing trials. Chapter 74, “Hemodynamic Monitoring” is an outline of hemodynamic monitoring and consists of a somewhat superficial overview of monitoring principles and techniques. The brevity of the chapter likely reflects the lack of overwhelming evidence from large clinical trials to confirm that use of different monitoring techniques is associated with improved outcomes in the critically ill. This point is made throughout the chapter and in the summary of key points. For a more in-depth discussion of monitoring techniques, the reader should refer to the references

L. McIntyre, MD (✉) · A. R. des Orleans, MD
The Ottawa Hospital, Ottawa, ON, Canada
e-mail: lmcintyre@ohri.ca

provided and separate texts that are devoted to the topic. In Chapter 114, “Acute Renal Failure”, there is a summary of acute kidney injury (AKI), which has been a focus of increased research in recent years. The authors provide an informative summary of the epidemiology and current definitions for AKI as well as an evidence-based discussion on the approach to treatment. A sub-section on renal replacement therapy, which addresses different modalities, dose, dialysis membranes, buffers, and medication dosing, is also particularly helpful. Finally, in Chapter 214, “Conversations with Families of Critically Ill Patients”, the authors highlight the importance of empathic conversations with families of critically ill patients and how effective communication can have a positive effect on a family’s satisfaction with their intensive care unit experience. The complexities associated with decision-making in critically ill patients and various models of decision-

making are reviewed, and perspectives of the surrogate decision-maker are incorporated into the discussion. An evidence-based approach to effective communication is aptly summarized in the text, and accompanying tables and approaches to communication are highlighted with illustrative examples.

With the constant evolution of evidence, no printed textbook can remain absolutely current; however, the *Textbook of Critical Care, 6th Edition*, with its broad range of topics covered in a concise yet comprehensive manner, is an excellent resource for both junior and experienced practitioners of intensive care medicine. This edition of this reference text certainly merits inclusion in any contemporary critical care library.

Competing interests None declared.