Essentials of Pain Medicine—Third Edition

Honorio T. Benzon, Srinivasa N. Raja, Spencer S. Liu, Scott M. Fishman, Steven P. Cohen. Elsevier Saunders. ISBN 978-1-4377-2242-0

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The third edition of *Essentials of Pain Medicine* has changed its focus in a number of areas compared to the well-received second edition in 2005. The authors acknowledge in the preface that the explosion of new information and technology in regional anesthesia over the last seven years have made it difficult, if not impossible, to put together a comprehensive textbook on pain medicine and regional anesthesia. They instead decided to focus on their main mission, which was to produce a comprehensive textbook on pain and its management—an ambitious task indeed.

To achieve this goal, they first changed the name of the book. They dropped “Regional Anesthesia” from the title to reflect this new focus. Second, they removed chapters dealing exclusively with the practice of regional anesthesia, such as those on local anesthetic pharmacology, neuraxial anesthesia, and complications of regional anesthesia. The authors recognized, however, that pain physicians are interested in, and perform, regional blocks and so included—indeed expanded and modernized—sections on peripheral nerve blocks.

New chapters have been added including those that address chronic pain after surgery, joint injections, and ultrasonography-guided interventional pain procedures. Consistent with the well-recognized crossover between psychiatry and pain medicine, a new chapter was added that addressed the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* and pain management.

This edition has shrunk slightly, from 734 pages to 664 pages, including the indices, reflecting the changes in focus.

The book is laid out in eight sections: Basic Considerations, Clinical Evaluation and Diagnostic Examinations, Pharmacology and Pharmacologic Modalities, Therapeutic Interventions, Perioperative Pain Management, Chronic Pain Syndromes, Interventional Techniques for Pain Management, and Cancer Pain. Each section is composed of a few chapters that provide a thorough, yet succinct, treatment of each topic area. Readers at or beyond the years of this reviewer would be well advised to have their “cheaters” handy, as the text is presented in rather large blocks and a small font size. The authors make good use of tables and figures to augment the text. The quality and simplicity of the images are commendable, but they are all reproduced in black and white. In the case of imaging studies, it is not a problem; and indeed the imaging reproduction is outstanding. However, some diagrams would benefit from colour reproduction.

As is typical in multiauthor texts, each chapter reads a little differently. Chapters are uniformly concise and well referenced. Most conclude with bulleted “key points” that summarize the highlights of the chapter. Also welcome is the fully searchable online version that comes with each book (available at <http://www.expertconsult.com>).

Some of the chapters are specific to practitioners in the United States, making the material mostly irrelevant to Canadian and international readers. The chapter “Legal and Regulatory Issues in Pain Management” refers only to American acts and statutes and thus would be of limited interest outside the United States.

The authors have done an excellent job of summarizing the diagnosis and treatment of many acute and chronic pain states, each in its own succinct, readable, and practical chapter. Interventional techniques are well described and include descriptions of fluoroscopic and ultrasonography-guided techniques. Chapters dealing with

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issues unique to pediatric and geriatric pain are also included.

In summary, the editors of the third edition of *Essentials of Pain Medicine* have managed to streamline the focus of the book while maintaining its readable, practical style. Trainees in anesthesia will find the book an excellent

adjunct for their “pain” rotation, and fellows and practitioners addressing chronic pain would be hard pressed to find a more complete reference book to add to their libraries.

Competing interests None declared.