Understanding Anesthesia: A Learner's Guide

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Upon reviewing *Understanding Anesthesia: A Learner's Guide*, it is apparent that this text cannot be placed simply into the category of introductory guides to the field of anesthesia, because it is much more than that. This is not only a textbook but also an iBook that is easily downloaded through iBookstore and easily navigated on an iPad. While iBooks are certain to be the future of our specialty, for the time being they are fairly novel. Dr. Raymer has produced one of the first iBooks in the area of novice education, and the fact that she and her colleagues have presented it for free is even more laudable.

Due to the progressive design of this book, a proper review should probably include a discussion of the technical/technological aspects of the project with a separate discussion of the content, both of which are discussed here.

Dr. Raymer and her group have set up a Web site (www.understandinganesthesiology.com) to house information and act as a portal for distribution of the book. It is also offered by the iPad bookstore and as a download in PDF format, though the videos are not available on that platform. I used my iPad2 and an up-to-date version of iBooks to locate the guide, and I had no trouble finding it in Apple's iBookstore or loading it onto my device. The book is easily navigable, and for those who are not familiar with maneuvering through iBooks in general, Dr. Raymer starts the book with a concise page titled "Getting the Most From Your iBook". I found myself constantly returning to this page to remind myself of some of the great features that iBooks can offer beyond those of traditional hard-copy books. Such features include the ability to "pinch" the

current page to allow easy navigation through the pages and chapters in order to open the page of interest. A wonderful glossary feature, which is opened by tapping any page, lists many important terms and drugs. A tap on the term in question offers information on the topic and lists all sites in the text where the term is located. A tap on the site takes the reader directly to the term's location in the text. The book has many embedded videos, diagrams, and tables that can be easily accessed and viewed. The videos are logically placed, and use of the "pinch" feature outlined above facilitates the quick location and easy access of specified videos.

Perhaps one of the most useful features in this iBook is the final chapter titled "Drug Finder". On the surface, this is a one-page list of many commonly used anesthetic drugs. But there is more to it than that. As with the glossary function, tapping the drug in question relays pertinent information, including dosing, basic pharmacology, effects, and contraindications. This feature alone makes *Understanding Anesthesia: A Learner's Guide* a resource that all anesthesia practitioners should carry on their iPad to use as a quick reference when teaching others in the operating room environment.

The content of *Understanding Anesthesia: A Learner's Guide* is geared toward medical students with little or no previous exposure to the field or to off-service residents looking for an introductory guide, and it certainly satisfies that objective. The chapters are arranged in a logical order, starting with Chapter 1: The ABCs which outlines airway management and fluid resuscitation. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 are titled The Pre-operative Phase, The Intra-operative Phase, and the Post-operative Phase, respectively. The chapters essentially walk the novice through these three distinct chronological phases of our specialty and outline the basics of our day-to-day thought processes. I envision

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this text as being very useful for individuals looking to spend a day now and again with us in the operating room or for medical students beginning their rotation. The material in *Understanding Anesthesia: A Learner's Guide* may be too basic to form the basis for an entire undergraduate curriculum, and it is probably not suitable for the anesthesia resident. It does not provide comprehensive detail in any area, and there is a significant lack of detail in physiology and disease processes. While this may not be the stated goal of this book, such principles will definitely be taught to medical students in one- or two-week rotations, and these students will have to look elsewhere to gain this knowledge. Furthermore, while the book's format on the iPad is highly progressive, the layout of the

text does not always follow suit. It would have been preferable to have some content delivered in a more constructivist style, perhaps utilizing a case-based learning approach.

Nevertheless, *Understanding Anesthesia: A Learner's Guide* delivers on what it strives to do, i.e., push the technological boundaries of how we deliver an introductory text on anesthesia. For everyone in possession of an iPad, it should be *sine qua non* for their first rotation through the operating room. These days, that probably represents most students we encounter.

Competing interests None declared.