

This case provides evidence that sympathetic hyperactivity in tetanus may present as pure beta hyperactivity: the drug of choice in such cases obviously, is different and should be chosen only after clear definition of the type of sympathetic hyperactivity.

Yours sincerely,

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Book Reviews

Intensive Care. Eric Sherwood-Jones (ed). London: MPT Press 1982. pp 464, 33 figures, 57 tables, £ 24,95

“Intensive Care”, edited by Eric Sherwood-Jones, attempts to provide a guide for nurses and doctors working on intensive care units.

It is admitted in the preface that the knowledge required to deal with critically ill patients is encyclopaedic, and therefore this short book can only be an introduction. The Editor has invited a selection of international authors to contribute. The introductory chapters deal with the essential knowledge such as intravenous feeding, immunology, microbial infection, IPPV, shock etc. The book then continues with discussion of rarer conditions; botulism, tetanus and Guillain-Barre syndrome, and concludes with a chapter on the recovery room and training of intensive care nurses and medical undergraduates.

The book is well edited, resulting in a conformity of style which is easily readable. As appears to be almost inevitable in multi-author publications, there is a good deal of repetition. The chapters generally follow the same format, and are as comprehensive as is possible in a book of this size, usually including details of the pathophysiology of the disease process, management and complications.

I felt that the book should have included more detailed discussions on the pharmacology applied to the sick patient, in particular the use of inotropes and vasodilators, which are only briefly mentioned.

The contributions on Guillain-Barre's syndrome, botulism and tetanus were interesting and informative, but I did wonder if it was appropriate in a book of this size to devote valuable space to such relatively rare conditions.

In the preface the editor states that his book is designed to help doctors and nurses in the intensive care unit. I feel that there is not enough information to help the doctor specialising in intensive care medicine, but the considerations of the problems of nursing the sick patient included in the text may make it a useful book for some intensive care nurses.

Dr. C. Bullen (London)

Neonatal Intensive Care. L. Wille and M. Obladen. Berlin, Heidelberg, New York: Springer-Verlag 1981. 283 pp, 49 figures, 76 tables. DM 49,50

This is a revised English version of a book originally published in German in 1978. It essentially reflects the practices of the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit based at the University of Heidelberg. Although the emphasis is on respiratory disorders and their treatment there is a particularly helpful short chapter on cardiological problems in the newborn and other subjects include neurological, metabolic and haematological disorders, nutrition and sepsis. The authors indicated in the preface to the original edition that their working guidelines were not intended as a “cookbook” but should be modified according to circumstances. This is a sensible philosophy for any practical manual but it does mean that the writer must ensure that underlying principles are adequately explained. My main quarrel with this book is that the presentation in the form of brief notes with many lists does not lend itself to an understanding of the principles of neonatal intensive care.

Mechanical ventilation is the single most important aspect of intensive care responsible for reducing mortality in premature babies with respiratory disorders. The authors quite correctly point out that the type of ventilator used is secondary to the skills of the user. I would have liked to have seen these skills explored with more attention to basic principles. Instead there are rather didactic notes on the indications for mechanical ventilation and the control of ventilator settings. Nevertheless there are snatches of helpful advice to be found particularly when general principles are discussed as for example in the section on complications of mechanical ventilation.

Intraventricular haemorrhage (IVH) is now the most common cause of death in premature babies — and is probably responsible for a large proportion of handicaps in survivors. In spite of the fact that IVH is a common occurrence in premature babies receiving intensive care the subject is dismissed in half a page.

I cannot recommend this book to anyone seeking an introduction to neonatal intensive care. However, those already familiar with the subject might like to read how one particular unit manages their ill babies.

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