
Book Reviews

A Rational Basis for Anesthesiology

Gianfranco Dal Santo. Piccin Nuova Libreria, S.p.A., Padua, Italy, 1990. pp 933. \$80.00 U.S. ISBN #88-299-0809-6

"A Rational Basis for Anesthesiology" is a large format, profusely illustrated, 933 page textbook. Developed from lectures presented to residents at Texas Tech University by the author, this work attempts to cover the full range of anaesthetic practice. The author's writing style is consistent, clear, and makes easy reading. The author states two major objectives for the book: first, to provide the newcomer to anaesthesia access to the basic concepts of the field; and second, to generate enthusiasm for anaesthesia in the reader.

Organized into 36 chapters which cover topics spanning basic pharmacology, equipment, monitoring and clinical practice, the book weaves basic science and clinical medicine together in a simple, straight-forward fashion. This consistency of style and purpose is perhaps the major advantage of a singly authored work. While not intended as a reference, the references cited are mainly to other texts published before 1987. If the book is intended to create enthusiasm for the reader, there is little direction for the reader in terms of additional reading.

Does the book succeed in its primary objective? Compared to other texts available, it tends to be superficial. First-year residents expect more information and also key modern references. Without pivotal references to encourage use later in training, this book, once read, may remain on the shelf.

Where does the book belong? It succeeds in providing a lucid and succinct overview of anaesthesia (despite its page length). It might best be used as a reading resource for residents in their first months of training. While I would not recommend each resident purchase this book, it would provide a useful adjunct to the more comprehensive texts available in the Department's library.

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Regional Opioid Analgesia

J. De Castro, J. Meynadier, M. Zenz. Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht, 1991. pp. 637. 395.00 Dfl/\$195.00 U.S./£126.50 U.K. ISBN # 0-7923-0162-5

This large book is an extensive attempt to cover the entire field of regional opioid analgesia as it relates to patient care.

It consists of two parts: Part 1 – Basic Science and Technical Aspects; Part 2 – Clinical Practice.

The eight chapters in Part 1 cover the anatomy and physiology relevant to opioid analgesia, pharmacology, pharmacokinetics of opioids, side-effects of opioids, an extensive chapter on the drugs used for opioid analgesia, equipment and drug delivery systems. The eleven chapters in Part 2 range from intraoperative use, postoperative pain, acute pain situations, obstetrics, cancer pain, chronic non-malignant pain, as well as some other aspects such as the risk benefit ratio for opioid analgesia. There is detailed separation of the topics almost on a page-by-page basis, plus extensive use of acronyms, for example EDOA = epidural opioid analgesia. In addition, there is very wide use of tables, drawings, and figures. This is an excellent attempt to cover an extremely wide field in which opioid analgesia is used to control pain, of either acute or chronic origin.

In general, the authors have tried to incorporate every reference available up to fairly recent times on each particular topic related to opioid analgesia. The bibliography is outstanding and numbers 114 pages. As such, this is an extremely useful text for the reader who is interested in regional opioid analgesia, and with the current interest in pain management in anaesthesia this includes a large number of practitioners. In addition, the book also provides detailed information for the techniques required for regional opioid analgesia.

However, the book has some drawbacks. Information quoted from references should be checked against the original papers as in some instances references were incorrectly cited. Nonetheless, this text is the most comprehensive review of regional opioid analgesia and provides the best reference list on the subject. With the above proviso in mind I can recommend this book for all anaesthetists wishing to get an in-depth review of regional opioid analgesia.

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