Book Reviews

Hazards and Complications of Anaesthesia, 2nd ed.

T.H. Taylor, Edward Major, Eds. Churchill Livingstone.
1993. ISBN 0-443-04259-4. \$202.95 (Cdn.)

A comprehensive review of all potential complications of anaesthesia, major and minor, is a formidable task. The editors (T.H. Taylor and E. Major) have attempted to accomplish this through an amalgamation of expert opinion covering 46 chapters. Chapter one reviews epidemiological data on anaesthesia morbidity and mortality and introduces the concept of "critical incidents." Chapter two examines similarities between the practice of anaesthesia and the aviation industry in an attempt to shed light on how it may be possible to further improve anaesthesia safety.

Chapters 3-14 deal with the interactions between anaesthesia and major organ systems (e.g., cardiovascular system) which may lead to morbidity and mortality. The information in this "section" of the book can be found in any general anaesthesia reference text. However, some chapters are well written and offer an excellent synopsis of important controversial topics (e.g., halothane hepatitis).

When I sought to find information on four arbitrary subjects (negative pressure pulmonary oedema, intraoperative compartment syndromes, postoperative pain control and preemptive analgesia, and emergency airway management) the book either failed to provide any reference to the topic or was inaccurate or outdated. Quoting from the textbook, "any nerve can be blocked after surgery (for the provision of postoperative analgesia) if it is accessible, but the only two techniques that are really feasible are intercostal and epidural blocks." Furthermore, "morphine is not a suitable candidate for postoperative pain relief by the spinal route and ... these patients (intrathecal morphine) cannot be looked after on an ordinary ward."

However, the chapters on specialized topics not found in standard anaesthesia texts are, by themselves, worth the price of the book (Pseudocholinesterase deficiency, Awareness during anaesthesia, Psychological responses to anaesthesia, Electrical equipment, Anaesthetists and the law). Information in these chapters was up to date, comprehensive and thought-provoking.

While this textbook has several limitations it does have a place in your library as a reference text.

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A Laboratory Basis for Anesthesiology

G. Dal Santo. Piccin Nuova Libreria, Padua, Italy.
1993. 763 Pages. ISBN 88-299-1081-X.

This textbook describes the principles underlying laboratory and monitoring tests and discusses their use in clinical practice. After an introductory overview, the author describes biochemical testing including haematology, arterial blood gas, renal, hepatic and endocrine function testing. These chapters review basic science and physiology, fundamentals of the laboratory assay and the clinical use of each test in anaesthetic practice. Also described are the modalities used to evaluate cerebral and cardiopulmonary structure and function and the testing of muscle relaxation. Other topics include: the radioisotope tracer technique, electrical devices, teaching simulators and research in anaesthesia.

The single authorship of this book provides consistency throughout a well-illustrated, comprehensible text. Historical references throughout the text and a pictorial insert on the history of laboratory medicine provides added dimension. Although additional reading references are provided at the end of each chapter, none of the material presented is specifically supported by references to published experimental or clinical data.

In conclusion, this book covers many topics in an interesting, readable manner. Although the topic of this text is of importance to the anaesthesia trainee, much of its content (e.g., physiology) is covered in other core anaesthesia textbooks. This book would thus be most valuable as a reference text or supplemental reader for the anaesthesia trainee or consultant.

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