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## Book Reviews

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### **Anesthesia Biologic Foundations**

*Tony L. Yaksh, Carl Lynch III, Warren M. Zapol, Mervyn Maze, Julien F. Biebuyck, Lawrence J. Saidman* (Eds.). Lippincott-Raven Publishers, 1998. 1504 pages. \$336.95 ISBN 0-397-58742-2

This textbook, the product of 10 years' work, represents a major advance to our specialty. It will be welcomed by clinicians interested in how, where, and why anaesthetics work and basic science researchers in the field of anaesthesiology and related disciplines. The result of a tremendous effort, it is the first textbook to provide a comprehensive summary of the cellular mechanisms of anaesthetics. Such information is currently not available in most standard anaesthesia textbooks.

This book is broadly divided into 2 sections: Cell Biology of Anesthetic Action and Integrated Systems. Section 1 considers the control of cell signalling as well as techniques used to study cell function. The overriding theme of this section is that proteins in the cell membrane are the primary sites of anaesthetic actions. General anaesthetics alter cell communication by disrupting synaptic transmission and post-synaptic signal transduction. Section 2 summarizes studies of anaesthetic effects on behavioural states (e.g. consciousness and memory), pain and the cardiorespiratory system. Section 2 co-ordinates the cellular knowledge summarized in Section 1 and applies it to the function of the whole animal. This section will be of interest to clinicians involved in pain management, critical care and cardiorespiratory medicine.

The editors and authors have succeeded in their objective of providing a valuable reference for those seeking information regarding the science of anaesthesia. The book has a well earned place in the libraries of Departments of Anaesthesia.

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### **The Critically Ill Cardiac Patient. Multisystem Dysfunction and Management**

*Vladimir Kvetan, David R. Dantzer* (Eds.). Lippincott-Raven Publishers, 1996. 417 pages. \$112.50 (US). ISBN 0-397-51465-4

This book is intended for cardiologists and cardiologists in training who are involved in the management of crit-

ically ill cardiac patients. Its goal is to provide "a collaborative view of state of the art multisystem management science". It is written by an impressive, internationally recognized group of cardiologists, intensivists, anaesthesiologists, cardiac and non-cardiac surgeons, and respirologists. There are 22 chapters which deal with a wide range of issues including pathophysiology and treatment of both cardiac and non-cardiac disease, peri-operative management of patients undergoing cardiac and noncardiac surgery, septic shock and multiple organ failure, pharmacology and cardiac toxicity, cardiac trauma, monitoring radiology and invasive procedures, and scoring systems for the cardiovascular patient. Most chapters are thoroughly referenced, clearly written, and contain appropriate figures and illustrations. They generally cover the broad spectrum of critically ill cardiac patients ranging from cardiogenic shock to organ transplantation to postoperative cardiac and non-cardiac surgery to multiorgan failure.

This book is somewhat limited by its size: it is too large to be used as a pocket handbook, but too small to be considered a definitive text of cardiac critical care. Nonetheless, this book will be a valuable addition to the library of a facility looking after critically ill cardiac patients, whether the attending physicians are cardiologists, anaesthetists, surgeons or internists.

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### **Molecular and Neurobiology of Pain. Progress in Pain Research and Management, Vol 9.**

*David Borsook* (Ed.). IASP Press, 1997. 369 pages. ISBN 0-931092-19-1

This book consists of summaries of papers presented at a pain conference that celebrated the 150th anniversary of the first public demonstration of ether. The conference was sponsored by the Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School. As the ninth publication in a series titled "Progress in Pain Research and Management," the book focuses on new molecular mechanisms of chronic pain.

Although the book represents grey literature (not peer-reviewed), the authors should be commended on the obvious efforts that they have made in writing their chapters. However, the form in which each chapter is presented is unlikely to stimulate interest for the

Journal's readers. Unfortunately, the translation of laboratory research to clinical therapy is a difficult task.

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**The Handbook of Critical Care Drug Therapy, 2nd ed.**

*Gregory M. Salsa, Henry Masur, Robert E. Cunnion, Anthony F. Suffredini, Frederick P. Ognibene, William D. Hoffman, James H. Shelhamer.* Williams & Wilkins, 1998. 436 pages. ISBN 0-683-30293-0

This handbook is a well organized, lab coat sized, wealth of information for anyone who works in the Intensive Care Unit setting. The book presents its information in table format. It is organized into broad systems categories and one needs to refer to the table of contents to locate the appropriate table. The tables themselves are problem-oriented and cover a particular therapeutic question. They are all easy to read and contain the essential information of the drug, the indications, doses, adjustments for organ insufficiency and interactions with other drugs. The range of topics covered is quite comprehensive including a toxicology section and a therapeutic drug monitoring section. There is also an index that includes both the generic and trade names of drugs to make it easier to locate information. One drawback of the book is the reliance on American units leaving those of us trained in the SI system in the dark. This is a particular problem in the drug monitoring and the toxicology sections.

Overall, this is an excellent drug handbook that is easy to use and to carry with you as a quick reference as you work in the ICU. It would be useful for house staff doing their ICU rotation as well as for those of us working in the ICU.

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**Pain Relief in Labour**

*Robin Russell, Mark Scrutton, Jackie Porter.* BMJ Publishing Group, 1997. 256 pages. £27.00. ISBN 0-7279-1009-4

"The management of pain relief in labour should be of prime concern to all health professionals involved in pregnancy and childbirth". With this statement in mind, the authors of this text aim to provide:

1. A balanced, comprehensive and practical account of alternative approaches to pain relief in labour, 2. A reference text for health professionals who explain analgesia options to expectant women, 3. Practical guidance

to anaesthetists in pursuit of their own particular skills.

The book is divided into three sections, each written by a different author. An evidence-based assessment of the psychological and physical methods of labour pain relief in current use, as well as those techniques abandoned for lack of efficacy or safety, is presented in Part 1. The references accompanying this section span nearly half a century and serve to direct the interested reader to literature from a variety of disciplines.

Part 2 concentrates on systemic analgesia with inhalational and opioid agents. It follows the same general format adopted in Part 1. Items of historical interest are discussed while a more detailed review of the efficacy, mode of action, method of administration, complications and effects on mother and baby is provided for agents in widespread use in the 1990's (nitrous oxide, meperidine).

The tone of the text changes in Part 3, regional analgesia. The prose is specific rather than general, practical as opposed to theoretical and occasionally peppered with dogmatic "how to" statements that reflect institutional bias. Cartoons are used to emphasize certain points.

The first chapter begins with a discussion of the anatomy of the vertebral canal and pain pathways and ends with a brief review of local anaesthetic and opioid pharmacology. There are two errors in factual information. The first ascribes the duration of action of lidocaine to its lipid solubility. The second suggests that higher doses of local anaesthetics are required to block A delta fibres versus the smaller, unmyelinated C fibres.

Subsequent chapters review indications and contraindications to regional analgesia, effects and complications, practical procedures and maintenance and monitoring of epidural, spinal and CSE techniques.

The brevity with which some topics are handled in Part 3 creates a modest disadvantage for the non-anaesthetist or anaesthesia trainee. The information requires interpretation in light of local practices, experience and outcomes. The book concludes with thoughts on how to ensure analgesia continues throughout labour, audit anaesthetic practice and deal with problems that may arise in the post-partum period.

This first edition, is devoted to pain relief in labour. It brings together, different types of analgesia that have been studied for use in labour. The sections on non-pharmacologic and systemic methods are balanced, informative and well referenced. The goal of providing information of interest to a broad audience of health professionals, including anaesthetists, is realized. The section on regional analgesia is neither comprehensive nor a practical guide and this type of information is better represented in standard textbooks of obstetric anaesthesia.

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## NEW JOURNAL REVIEW

**International Journal of Acute Pain Management**  
*Stephan A. Schug* (Ed.). Saldatore Ltd., 1997. 56  
pages. ISSN 1366-0071

The *International Journal of Acute Pain Management* made its debut in December 1997. This is a peer-reviewed, quarterly-published journal with some unique features. First, it is dedicated exclusively to issues of acute pain management taking the readers to 'one stop' for focused specialist material. Second, it provides an international and interdisciplinary forum for practitioners to discuss topics in scientific research, organizational structure, professional education and economic issues. Anticipated contributors and audience to this journal are nurses, physiotherapists, pharmacists and psychologists in addition to physicians.

The editorial board consists of 22 well-known international (Asia, America, Europe, Australia) investigators and clinicians in acute pain management. The journal is divided into several sections: editorial, original articles, review articles, clinical and case reports, debate forum and letters to the editor. The premiere issue contains several clinical articles related to pharmacological treatment (e.g., intravenous vs epidural fentanyl analgesia, interpleural analgesia, subcutaneous morphine for postoperative pain), a review article addressing acute pain practice guideline in Germany and an interesting debate about anesthesiologist versus nurse based acute pain service. Tables and illustrations are nicely displayed along with relevant references.

This acute pain management journal with an international flavour has a reasonable subscription price of US \$ 110 per year. The journal will, no doubt, be an excellent addition for practitioners in this expanding field of medicine.

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