
Book Reviews

Principles and Practice of Intensive Care Monitoring
Martin J. Tobin (Ed.). McGraw-Hill, 1998. 1525
 pages. ISBN 0-07-065094-2

Anesthesiologists know the importance of monitoring! No other specialty relies on monitoring to the same extent, in terms of rapidity of clinical changes, and the swiftness of the required responses. Anesthesiologists also learn, more than other specialists, about the mechanisms of action of clinical monitors - ask a resident from any specialty how an automated blood pressure cuff or a pulse oximeter works! Beyond this experience or knowledge, anesthesiologists have been at the forefront of instituting standards of care for monitors such as pulse oximetry and capnography, with well documented outcome benefits to their patients. To review a book devoted to monitoring, in our national anesthesia journal, and edited by one of the foremost academic intensivists of our generation, is a pleasure and a challenge.

There are other books about monitoring. Some, focusing on anesthesia, are outstanding. None, however, have been able to utilize the broad range of multidisciplinary - and truly international - talent required to produce a blockbuster like the current volume. This book is a credit to the editor and his assembled team. More than that, it is a credit to the emerging subspecialty of critical care medicine. Why is it so special? First, it is grounded in the knowledge that, as the editor says in the preface, "A monitoring device *per se* has never cured anyone..", reassuring the reader that the focus is secure! Second, it is planned and laid out in a logical, comprehensive, and comprehensible manner. This text is no 'grab bag' of miscellaneous monitor descriptions. Third, more than being written 'for intensivists by intensivists', the authors are among the best available, and include experts from all the medical specialties, respiratory therapy, biomedical engineering, industry, and the law! Thus, the reader is presented with a comprehensive account of monitoring standards, historical perspectives, biomedical issues, systems theory, related computer science, decision methodology, safety and legal concerns, and an account of the regulatory standpoint. In the current atmosphere of high pressure marketing and budget construction, the final chapter -telling the intensivist how to choose specific equipment- is a gem, and a very opportune one at that!

This book is superb. Maybe it will encourage the mandatory adoption of monitoring standards in critical care medicine that have been applied so successfully in anesthesia. Whether or not it does that, it more than succeeds in its primary goals. Every department involved in the care of critically ill patients should have this book immediately available, and every practitioner of critical care medicine should have their own - it explains the tools of our trade as never before!

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Atlas of Regional Anesthesia, 2nd ed.
David L. Brown. W.B. Saunders Company, 1999. 376
 pages. \$201.00. ISBN 0-7216-7004-0

The author's stated goals "to simplify regional anesthesia rather than add to its complexity" are more than met in this excellent text. This is a book which reflects further evolution in teaching concepts coupled with advances in chronic pain, imaging techniques and a wonderfully organized and structured summary of the pharmacological principles of local anesthetic agents. Newer blocks, for Chronic Pain states, such as sacroiliac, superior hypogastric plexus, facet and infraclavicular approaches to the brachial plexus are included along with an updated approach to the appropriate use of anatomy, dermatomes and clinical pearls reflecting the author's hands-on clinical expertise. All we need to add is a hip-related "push-pull, pinch-pinch" e.g. "flex-extend, abduct-adduct" for use in the lower limb as the former is so effectively used in upper limb blocks and we would have more bedside pearls to use with our patients.

This book should be on every anesthesiologist's desk and might be useful for those who practice acupuncture.

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