
Book Reviews

Near Misses in Pediatric Anesthesia

John G. Brock Utne. Butterworth-Heinemann, 1999. 101 pages. \$35.00 (US). ISBN 0-7506-7018-5

It is an all too common cliché that textbooks of anesthesia read as though written by those who no longer practice anesthesia. All the more refreshing, therefore, to come across a book which is pure delight for the clinician.

"Near Misses" consists of 47 case studies spread over 98 pages. Each case is laid out using the same formula. The front page describes the events, provides the clues, and asks the questions. Usually the questions are "What happened?" and "What would you do?" The back page gives the solution; discusses the event; makes recommendations for prevention and management; and provides references. Like a pulp mystery, the clues are sometimes obscure, the solutions are not always convincing, and some of the near misses do not miss. But the cases are real, the stories are believable, and their presentation is engaging. It is noteworthy that most of the events arise in routine circumstances involving ASA 1 and 2 patients. Just as in real life.

The joy of this book is that the problems are not easy and the solutions are not obvious. Life-threatening events under anesthesia are rare and personal experience with them is limited. Anesthesiologists have little opportunity to practice the scenarios where their skills are most needed and their abilities are most tested. This book cannot provide the total environment of a simulator, and no simulator can replace the heart pounding experience of a real emergency. What this little gem of a book can do is to help anesthesiologists mentally prepare for the next "near-miss" in their practice. It should be studied, rather than read, and a serious attempt to solve each mystery should be made before yielding to the temptation to turn the page. Like Jeopardy, the pleasure is in the question, not the answer...

C.M. Soder MD FRCPC
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Final FRCA: The Short Answer Questions

J. Nickells, M. Hasan, V. Ramachandra, N. Robinson. BMJ Books, 1998. 161 pages. £19.95. ISBN 0-7279-1289-5

This book is intended as an aid for candidates of the

FRCA (Fellowship of the Royal College of Anaesthetists) final examination to help prepare for the "short answer questions" section of that examination. It is authored by a group of practicing anesthesiologists. This section of the examination consists of twelve questions to be answered in short answer/essay form in three hours. The book provides nine sample papers designed to test the candidate's knowledge of the examination syllabus. The syllabus is said to be widely available and is not provided in this book. Model answers are provided to each question and are organized, of appropriate length, and thorough.

The introduction stresses the breadth of knowledge required by the candidate and provides practical advice on completion of the examination. The subject matter of the questions is diverse and a sample paper may include questions on obstetrical anesthesia, statistics, pain management, equipment sterilization, critical care, anatomy, pharmacology and intraoperative anesthesia management.

This book will likely be useful for its intended readership. It is, however, of little value for those residents preparing for the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada certification examinations as the short answer format no longer exists.

Ramona A. Kearney MD FRCPC
Edmonton, Alberta

Anaesthesia for Laser Surgery of the Oral Cavity, Pharynx, Larynx & Trachea

D. Dagupta, V. Kakhandi, R. Chandavarkar. Wockhardt Limited, 1998. 63 pages.

This 63 page text reviews some of the practical issues regarding laser surgery for upper airway lesions. The book is divided into eight chapters covering the history of laser physics and its medical applications, a review of anesthesia techniques for laser surgery of the upper airway and concludes with a series of photographs of oral pathology and the equipment they use for upper airway laser surgery.

The historical information presented in this book is interesting and is material not covered in such detail in other anesthesia reference text books. In the section covering anesthetic techniques, the authors briefly review the standard approaches to anesthesia for laser

surgery of the upper airway. However, most of this section presents their own preference for an apneic technique. While interesting, this does not give a balanced approach to options for airway management.

This book is written in a stifled and difficult-to-read manner. The editing is poor. There are numerous grammatical and spelling errors throughout the book. The photographs are not referenced by the text. Apart from showing some oral pathology, the pictures do not add anything to the topic. The overall quality of the binding of the book is also poor.

In summary, this book may be of some interest to anesthesiologists with a subspecialty interest in laser surgery of the upper airway, but it has little to offer over existing reference texts for most anesthesiologists.

Bevin Bart MD
Calgary, Alberta