

Book Reviews

Drugs for the Respiratory System

Reuben M. Cherniack (Ed.). ISBN 0127908285
Academic Press Canada, Don Mills, Ontario. \$34.25

The purpose of this book is to collate current information on the pharmacological therapy of respiratory disease. The ten chapters review various classes of agent, including beta agonists, methylxanthines, corticosteroids, immunosuppressives, antitussives, and pulmonary vasodilators. In each case, basic pharmacology, clinical effects and toxicity are presented and the therapeutic value of specific agents for particular conditions is appraised. The authors and editor are members of the Departments of Medicine and Clinical Pharmacology of the National Jewish Centre for Immunology and Respiratory Medicine in Denver, Colorado.

The book is intended to be an up-to-date therapeutic reference for respirologists. Thus, it is oriented to consideration of treatment problems that currently concern that specialty – such as the long-term drug therapy of asthma and the prevention of progression of interstitial lung disease. Topics of greater importance to anaesthetists – such as the perioperative management of patients with asthma, the treatment of upper airway oedema and the management of aspiration pneumonitis – are either overlooked or dealt with in a very superficial way. Discussions of the pharmacology of the various agents presented might be of interest to anaesthetists, but the essential information is readily available elsewhere.

Accordingly, I find little basis for recommending this text to anaesthetists. It might be considered as a reference for a departmental library, but I suspect that contemporary editions of standard pharmacological and anaesthetic texts serve equally well in this subject area.

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Sir Robert MacIntosh's Lumbar Puncture and Spinal Analgesia – Intradural and Extradural. 5th Edition
J.A. Lee, R.S. Atkinson, M.J. Watt. Churchill Livingstone, New York 1985. ISBN 0443026718 (Academic Press Canada, Don Mills, Ontario) \$51.25

The prolific volume of scientific reports in the field of conduction anaesthesia has justified this fifth edition, now

120 pages longer and with one additional chapter on intradural narcotics. Expanded chapters cover topics of physiology and pharmacology and the chapters on spinal analgesia in obstetrics and intradural analgesia have been entirely rewritten. This task was accomplished with the aid of a third author, M.J. Watt.

All editions of this British text have maintained the primary objective of the "practical approach" for the clinical anaesthetist. The book is suited to the medical student and junior housestaff with heavily-weighted chapters on anatomy, physiology, techniques of lumbar puncture and complications. Illustrations are good but are inferior to many current texts now available. The first chapter, dedicated to the history of intradural and extradural analgesia, should be of interest to all anaesthetists.

As the title infers, the text is confined to lumbar blockade, purposefully omitting thoracic and cervical techniques. Despite the revision of this book, the most recent references are dated 1983, limiting the usefulness of the chapters on obstetrics, intradural narcotics and pharmacology. The topic of spinal analgesia and intractable pain is dealt with only briefly, with a mere two and a half pages and few references. Controversies surrounding the use of local anaesthetic drugs are not well presented, particularly the topic of cardiac toxicity of 0.75 per cent bupivacaine. The final criticism relates to the physical change in the book, which is now published in soft cover and unlikely to stand up to frequent library use.

As a practical introductory guide to the techniques of spinal anaesthesia, this new edition would, at best, be complementary to a more comprehensive textbook on the subject.

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Geriatric Anesthesia: Principles and Practice

C.R. Stephen, R.A.E. Assaf (Eds). Butterworth Publishers, Boston, 1986 ISBN 0-409-90010-9. \$44.95

Judging from the number of symposia, review courses, and publications during the past several years, geriatric anaesthesia is emerging as a new anaesthetic subspecialty! This hard-covered text with 22 contributing authors reviews the physiology, the pharmacology and the anaesthetic management of the elderly patient in

a total of 15 chapters. The now traditional systems-based review of aging is followed by chapters devoted to alterations in drug disposition, drug interactions in the elderly, and premedication in the elderly. The cardiovascular system is examined in three primary chapters. In addition to a basic review of aging of the adult cardiovascular system, and a discussion of the special problem of anaesthesia in the aged hypertensive patient, a chapter is devoted to evaluation of cardiovascular risk. The latter chapter is particularly disappointing in view of its emphasis on general issues related to cardiovascular risk (e.g., smoking, cholesterol levels) and lack of review of the already extensive literature concerning more specific identification of cardiovascular risk, particularly in relation to operations.

The most disappointing chapter is entitled "Risk Factors and Outcome in Elderly Patients: An Epidemiologic Study." This chapter is devoted mainly to the reporting of a retrospective analysis of the risk of anaesthesia and surgery, based on outcome in 1,000 patients 70 years of age and over subjected to more than 1200 operations in one hospital during a nine-month period ending in March 1979. Without knowing all of the circumstances of the study and of the nature of the institution (e.g., availability of intensive care beds for postoperative management) it is difficult to appreciate the general relevance of these data. However, the structure of the study would appear to provide guidance for the design of prospective studies with similar objectives.

All considered, this reviewer was forced to conclude that readers will find very little which is unique in this textbook. They will, however, find a relatively complete and current examination of the topic of geriatric anaesthesia, and for this reason this book is recommended for departmental libraries.

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Epidemiology in Anaesthesia

J.N. Lunn (Ed.). ISBN 0-7131-4502-1
Edward Arnold Publishers, London, 1986 £16.75

This 174-page book offers a good introduction to the field of epidemiology as applied to anaesthesia. The opening chapter by Dr. John Bunker highlights pre-1952 classic studies and nicely sets the stage for the remainder of the book. The next several chapters give an outline of epidemiological principles, emphasizing the importance and pitfalls of determining both numerators and denomi-

nators in calculating rates of adverse events, why and when to sample and the basics about the need for reliability and validity of outcome observations. The underlying concepts of research design, importance of sample size calculations and the essentials of data analysis are well covered in simple language devoid of jargon whenever possible. An entire chapter is devoted to reviewing recent studies on mortality, morbidity and risk studies in anaesthesia. This critical look at the current literature classifies studies by their methodologies, pointing out strengths and weaknesses of the major studies. This chapter also points out gaps in present knowledge and where future studies should be focusing.

The next several chapters apply this same critical thinking to two controversial topics in anaesthesia – the halothane hepatitis issue and the occupational health hazards of anaesthetic gas exposure. These well-researched chapters are highly recommended reading in their own right. A short chapter on the development of new drugs points out the role of anaesthetists in the surveillance of side effects of new anaesthetic agents. The last chapters look at record keeping in anaesthesia, why physicians do not like to do this and computer applications of the anaesthetic record.

Aside from the chapter on computers, this book is written in a clear concise fashion and uses a uniform critical approach throughout. The authors and the editor know their audience – they know that anaesthetists do not have time to read volumes and the know where anaesthetists have difficulties in interpretation of research and data analysis. A word of caution however – this book is not meant to be a "how to do epidemiologic research" book but is an introduction to the topic and illustrates how and why anaesthetists should be informed consumers of the anaesthetic literature. This book is recommended reading, particularly for anaesthetists, but all clinicians could benefit from its approach.

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Fluid and Electrolyte management in Critical Care

J. Askanazi, P.M. Starker, C. Weissman. Butterworth Publishers, Stoneham, MA. \$34.95 (US)

This multi-authored book is written for physicians, nurses and other paramedical staff caring for the critically ill.

It is divided into three sections concerning normal physiology, general principles of management and fluid and electrolyte management of specific organ systems. Of

particular interest is a chapter on haemorrhology. The section on calcium, phosphate and magnesium discusses magnesium in a very limited fashion and is not referenced in the index.

A section on the specific electrolyte and fluid problems associated with total parenteral nutrition would be a useful addition.

Despite stylistic differences between chapters, the editors have produced a very readable and useful book which will provide a good reference for residents and nurses caring for the critically ill patient.

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Cholinesterase

(Monographs in Human Genetics, Volume 11)
M. Whittaker. Karger 1986. ISBN 3-8055-4257-7

Although this book is short (134 pages, 14 figures, 28 tables, hard cover) it presents a comprehensive review (564 references) of plasma cholinesterase and its genetic variants by a well known author in this field.

Each of the ten chapters contains extensive sub-headings so that topics of interest can be readily located. Although the physical and biochemical properties of the enzyme are covered, the two areas of emphasis are genetic variation and interpretation in clinical medicine. An extensive listing of the frequencies of cholinesterase variants in different populations throughout the world is included. The chapter of most interest to clinicians is a well-written discussion on the interpretation of low plasma enzyme activities in which inherited, physiological, pathological and acquired causes must all be considered.

This review presents in a concise and readable manner, a large amount of information which should be especially of interest to anaesthetists and other health care workers who are involved with interpretation or study of plasma cholinesterase.

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Book Notes

Isoflurane (Forane®). A Compendium and Reference. Second Edition. E.I. Eger II, Anaquest, Madison, WI

The second edition of this popular information source for FORANE® contains considerable added information and is presented in a new and attractive hard-covered format. It is not commercially available but can be obtained from Anaquest.

Psycho (Physio) Logical Aspects and Treatments of Pain. Special Edition of Hypnose und Kognition (Band 3, Sonderheft, April, 1986), Munich, West Germany ISSN 0178-093X (Journal)

This bibliography contains more than 1600 entries, 90 per cent in English. The entries vary in length from a simple listing of the title to an abstract-like summary.

600 MCQs in Anaesthesia: Basic Sciences. P.J. Simpson, N.W. Goodman. Churchill Livingstone, London, 1985. ISBN 0-443-03041-3 (Academic Press Canada, Don Mills, Ontario) \$16.00

This book aims to provide examination practice at multiple choice questions on the basic sciences for the diploma of FFARCS. The questions are arranged in mock papers of 60 MCQs (20 physiology, 20 pharmacology, 20 physics, followed by the answers) to allow candidates to time themselves answering questions similar to those likely to be encountered in the actual examination.