Book & New Media Reviews

Leroy D. Vandam, MD: An Anesthesia Journey

Directed by Rafael Ortega MD. Produced by Melissa Yee MA. ©2004 Anesthesia Associates of Massachusetts, USA

This 31-min DVD from the Boston University School of Medicine is a 1998 interview with the late Dr. Leroy D. Vandam, the well-known star of American anesthesia. For those too young to remember, Dr. Vandam (1914-2004) was a renaissance man with a vast expertise in anesthesiology and its history.

Over his long career he published countless scientific, clinical and historical papers. His classic book "Introduction to Anesthesia" (with various co-authors) is now in its ninth edition. During the 1960s he served as the Editor-in-chief of Anesthesiology. And if that was not enough, Dr. Vandam was also known for his award-winning watercolour paintings.

In the DVD, Dr. Vandam reminisces over his lengthy career, reflecting mainly on the various types of anesthesia equipment he used over the years and how this equipment led to improvements in safety. Also discussed are his early years as a surgeon, his clinical experiences at the Peter Bent Brigham Hospital, and his insights concerning the nature of anesthesiology.

Although technically this DVD is an amateur effort, it is in fact a surprisingly polished and professional product, one that would even be suitable for broadcasting. I thoroughly enjoyed this excellent work.

Highly recommended.

D. John Doyle MD FRCPC

Cleveland Clinic Foundation, Cleveland, USA

Editor's note: A free copy of the DVD can be obtained by contacting the Anesthesia Department at Boston University Medical Center (phone: 617-638-6950; E-mail: Maureen.Omalley@bmc.org).

Seizures in Critical Care: A Guide to Diagnosis and Therapeutics

Panayiotis N. Varelas. Humana Press, 2004. 400 pages. \$125.00 (US). ISBN 1-588-29-342-4

Few medical emergencies are more dramatic and frightening than a patient who is experiencing recurrent seizures. The universal nature of epilepsy ensures that virtually all physicians will encounter a patient who develops a seizure while under their care. Though the medical consequences of seizures can be devastating in the healthiest of patients, the potential for adverse outcomes is even greater in the critically ill. Despite this, a scarcity of literature deals with the specific management of seizures in the medically ill where management and prevention are considerably more complicated. Thus, it is opportune that "Seizures in Critical Care: A Guide to Diagnosis and Therapeutics" has arrived to address this void.

At first glance, one may assume that the text would only benefit specialists who practice in a neurologic intensive care unit (ICU). However, as aptly pointed out in the text edited by Dr. Varelas, most ICU seizures occur in patients who have not had a prior event nor a neurological problem as their presenting illness. Further, as most specialists have limited exposure to the neurological literature and recent advances in epilepsy research, it is precisely this population of physicians who are likely to benefit the most from this text.

Dr. Varelas and the other authors present a comprehensive and evidence based review on a wide arrange of seizure related topics and each is covered in considerable detail. The well edited text presents information in a relatively uniform format that aids in using it as a quick reference. A strategy of the text is to present extensive discussions on the available research to allow the readers to formulate their own approach to complex topics. Unfortunately, at times these discussions become so comprehensive as to limit the flow of the text. Although possibly not the mandate of the text, a final suggestion would be to include a chapter on the interpretation of seizure investigations with an emphasis on electroencephalogram (EEG) readings. With the increasing popularity of continuous EEG monitors (an entity different from

BIS monitors), non-neurologic specialists will likely require a working knowledge of the EEG to manage patients who are at risk.

Thus, “Seizures in Critical Care: A Guide to Diagnosis and Therapeutics” could help address a deficit in the critical care literature. An ICU physician could certainly benefit from the text and most ICUs would be well served to have this book in their reference library to help in care of these complicated patients.

Dave Neilipovitz MD FRCPC
The Ottawa Hospital, Ottawa, Canada