Book Reviews

Awareness During Anesthesia

Mohamed M. Ghoneim (Ed.). Butterworth-Heinemann, 2000. 180 pages. ISBN 0-7506-7201-3

This ambitious text fills an obvious gap in the anesthesia literature. Edited and authored by many of the pre-eminent investigators in the field, it covers a broad spectrum of topics: awareness, memory and learning under anesthesia, monitoring the level of consciousness, the psychological ramifications of awareness and its attendant medico-legal consequences.

The volume presents a comprehensive review of a fascinating area of our specialty. Highlights include chapter five, which covers BIS technology and strikes the appropriate balance between readability and detail. Chapter seven, on the isolated forearm technique, presents a gripping, cautionary tale that should be required reading for any anesthesia practitioner.

While content and typographical errors are few, the text's shortcomings revolve around the editing and organization of chapters. Suffering from the unevenness and overlap typical of many multi-authored books, at times it reads more like a collection of review articles and editorials rather than a cohesive volume. Several topics are presented repeatedly throughout the text, which has the advantage of rendering individual chapters self-contained, but creates redundancy for those reading the book cover to cover. Some controversies, such as the reliability of BIS in detecting consciousness, are revealed not by a coherent weighing of the evidence, but by the divergent opinions of two authors, in two separate chapters.

There is also variability in the depth of coverage of material. For example, chapter two, entitled "Implicit memory for events during anesthesia" presents an exhaustively complete review of the topic, which, while useful as a reference, is too detailed to be digested. In contrast, there are areas where a significant degree of background knowledge is assumed. For example, in chapter three, entitled "Monitoring the depth of anesthesia" the essentials of EEG signal processing are glossed over and the reader is referred to a review article.

"Awareness during anesthesia" will be most appreciated by those with a high level of interest and knowledge in the area. Though future editions would benefit from more rigorous editing, as the sole text on such an important subject, it is a worthy addition to any anesthesia department library.

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Stricken Voices from the Hidden Epidemic of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

Peggy Munson. The Haworth Press Inc., 2000. 270 pages. \$30.00 (CDN) ISBN 0-7890-0895-5

This is not the kind of book an anesthesiologist will read spontaneously. However, anesthesiologists involved with pain management will see an interest in such a publication. This book is the testimony of numerous victims of the chronic fatigue immune dysfunction syndrome (CFIDS). Medical science cannot explain this syndrome which affects many persons (prevalence would be higher than that of lung cancer, breast cancer or HIV infection in women). In CFIDS, virtually every organ system is involved. We do not know if it is caused by a viral infection or not, and several patients have a low blood volume, cardiac disturbances and malfunction of the hypothalamus - pituitary - adrenal axis. Gulf war syndrome is a form of CFIDS. All victims have problems to have their illness recognized as a disease, and suicide is often considered. They have memory disturbances and try everything, without success.

It is probably important to be sensitized to this problem which, hopefully, will be better understood in the future. The book certainly reaches this objective.

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