
Book & New Media Reviews



Neural Mechanisms of Anesthesia

Joseph F. Antognini, Earl E. Carstens, Douglas E. Raines (Eds.). The Humana Press, 2003. 466 pages. \$175 US. ISBN 0-89603-997-8

This book provides a comprehensive, up-to-date view of current theories and ongoing research about mechanisms of action of general anesthetics. The major strength of this work is that it covers all levels of analysis from observations in behaving humans or animals to studies of molecular and physiochemical phenomena. This provides an excellent opportunity to attenuate the traditional boundaries between molecular and systems level research. Another strength is that most chapters provide a comprehensive bibliography. I saw two minor drawbacks. Firstly, there is a certain lack of integration across chapters, as is frequently seen with multi-authored books. Secondly, I would have liked to have a more detailed review of the electroencephalogram and evoked potentials as tools to study anesthetic action in humans. Despite the minor limitations, this is a book that will be of value to the novice looking for an overview of current theories, as well as to the specialist researcher wanting to know what others in the field are doing.

Gilles Plourde MD
Montreal, Quebec

Malignant Hyperthermia

J. Schulte am Esch, J. Scholz, F. Wappler (Eds.). Pabst Science Publishers, 2000. 428 pages. ISBN 3-934252-71-0

In 2000, several international experts have contributed to this publication which remains the most recent book on Malignant Hyperthermia (MH). This book is a good comprehensive update on clinical aspects, epidemiology, pathophysiology, genetics, pharmacology, testing for MH susceptibility, and many other topics related to MH.

Reading this book, clinicians will realize the complexity of MH genetics. In fact, many experts are now talking about the "human anesthetic myopathies": a

family of subclinical myopathies with similar clinical manifestations in the presence of volatile agents and/or succinylcholine. Over the last ten years, numerous mutations (mostly on chromosome 19) have been associated with MH. It is fascinating to understand how some of our anesthetic drugs can affect the intracellular calcium homeostasis and why, in the presence of a MH mutation, a catastrophic chain of events may occur.

Many readers will also appreciate learning more about the early detection of a MH crisis and the new therapeutic trend. With early detection and rapid administration of dantrolene, MH mortality has decreased to almost zero. Hopefully this book will help clinicians achieve this goal.

Instead of reading hundreds of recent articles on MH, many anesthesiologists will appreciate this 400-page update on MH.

Daniel Chartrand MD PhD
Montréal, Québec