
Book & New Media Reviews



Essential Anesthesia. From Science to Practice

Tammy Y. Euliano, Joachim S. Gravenstein.

Cambridge University Press, 2004. 262 pages.
\$39.99 (US). ISBN 0-521-53600-6

As anesthesiologists we are often asked by medical students, nurses and paramedical staff to recommend an anesthesia text suitable for them. I, for one, have had difficulty coming up with such a recommendation. There are textbooks targeted at junior doctors and also far more exhaustive texts suitable only for the specialist anesthesiologist, but introductory anesthesia texts that meet the needs of medical students and non-anesthesia physicians and medical staff are relatively few. "Essential Anesthesia. From Science to Practice" addresses this deficiency quite well.

This book is sufficiently brief and succinct to be of interest to its targeted audience. At the same time it is sufficiently comprehensive and lucid to retain the lay person's interest, and impart a meaningful understanding of the practice and scope of anesthesiology. Compared to some other rather "dry" texts, the authors have made a concerted effort to keep their readers interested. The tone is conversational and engaging, and the authors' wealth of teaching experience shows. The illustrations are crisp, and the tables and graphs easily understood, underscoring the book's value for the non-anesthesia provider.

The text is divided into three sections. The first section is devoted to the explanation of basic concepts essential to the understanding of anesthesiology. The second section provides the pharmacologic and physiologic information relevant to the field in a concise manner. The third section 'ties it all together' by providing case-based examples, applying this information to clinical practice. The cases reflect the spectrum of routine anesthetic practice. The case-based approach is especially useful as it provides the most immediate approach to the actual conduct of anesthesia, short of actually being in the operating room.

While brevity is appropriate and often necessary in such a text, the manner of discussion of some relatively controversial and complex issues (the role of perioperative β -adrenergic blockade presented in Chapter 1, for instance) may be overly simplistic. Despite such minor shortcomings, the text is generally

very well written and most appropriate for its intended audience.

I recommend this book highly to medical students, junior doctors, and medical professionals in other disciplines who wish to acquire a good grasp of the essentials of anesthesiology.

Mateen Raazi MBBS DABA FRCPSC

University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Canada