Book & New Media Reviews

Surgical Anatomy of the Heart, 3rd Edition

Benson R. Wilcox, Andrew C. Cook, Robert H. Anderson. Cambridge University Press, 2005. 319 pages. ISBN 0 521 86141 1

As indicated by the title, this book was originally intended for cardiac surgeons. Through editing, the aim of the author was to expand the readership to other specialties such as anesthesiology.

The principle of this book is to describe in detail the anatomy of the heart as seen by a cardiac surgeon. In ten chapters, the reader will learn about surgical approaches to the heart, the surgical anatomy of the valves, the surgical anatomy of the conduction system and the coronary circulation. About two-thirds of the book is devoted to congenital cardiac abnormalities.

The visual material of this text is superb: pictures of actual cases, pathological dissections and diagrams are clear and well-presented. The photographs are well highlighted and small pictorials in the corner (with indications such as anterior, apex, etc.) allow the reader to visually orientate the anatomical content of the figure in three dimensions. The visual content well complements the text which is clear, precise and informative.

As the focus of this text is on the anatomy as seen by the surgeon, the scope and details are probably beyond what most anesthesiologists need to know. On the other hand, the chapters on surgical anatomy of the valves and on congenital abnormalities are quite relevant to our practice: understanding what the surgeon sees allows us to better communicate, especially when discussing the interpretation of our transesophageal echocardiographic examinations.

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Basic Science for Anaesthetists, 2nd Edition

Sylvia Dolenska. Cambridge University Press, www.cambridge.org. 2006, 199 pages. \$55 US. ISBN 0-521-67602-9

Anesthesia practice requires a good understanding of physics and mathematics as well as physiology and pharmacology. It is not often that all four topics are reviewed in the same text. The changes in technology require that we review and understand the application of the basic sciences to anesthesia.

This book is a paperback focused on those preparing to take their primary FRCA exams in the United Kingdom. Dr. Dolenska mentions that she wrote the book from notes taken when reviewing for her primary exams and also when preparing subsequent tutorials.

The book is divided into four parts:

- Part 1: Physics, mathematics, statistics, anesthetic apparatus
- Part 2: Clinical measurement
- Part 3a: Physiology: the cardiovascular system
- Part 3b: Physiology: the respiratory system
- Part 4: Pharmacology

Each part contains a number of topics, each of which is clearly explained on the left page with supporting diagrams and drawings on the right. The format is clear and there is ample use of drawings. In fact, Dr. Dolenska had originally planned to use the subtitle "do you get the picture?" indicating the importance given to the text-linked illustrations.

Some examples of topics include: flow and resistance, mathematical concepts, Mapleson A breathing system, pulse oximetry, electromanometers, cardiac output measurement, respiratory mechanics, drug elimination. The book ends with a short list of six references for further reading. All the texts are well known authors, the building blocks of anesthesiology. The book is founded on the basics and does not depend on pages of references.

This is a reference text and is not one to pick up and browse. There is a random organization of topics within the parts. The form of the book is appropriate and the learning aids are well chosen. It does not aim to be all encompassing, but does within one cover

include notes on many of the concepts that could be stumbling blocks in understanding anesthetic practice. Criticism could be made that some concepts do not have enough information. The book is not meant as an introductory text and hence is not exhaustive. It is best used as a supplement, and in reviewing. However, the topics are well written and will stimulate further questions that can be pursued in a more thorough basic science text. Some of the topics do not seem relevant to clinical practice, but the focus of the primary FRCA exam is different from that of the FRCP(C) Canadian fellowship examination.

Dr. Dolenska's book is one that should be part of a departmental library. It has a role in exam review. Individuals interested in teaching will find it invaluable in providing illustrations that will help clarify topics that are important. For those with a particular interest in the physics and mathematics of anesthesia, it is a worthwhile purchase at a not unreasonable price.

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