Anesthesia Student Survival Guide – A Case-Based Approach

Jesse M. Ehrenfeld, Richard D. Urman, Scott Segal (Eds). Springer, 2010, 534 pages.
ISBN: 978-0-387-09708-4

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Published online: 17 August 2010
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The purpose of this book is to serve as an introductory text and basic reference source for students who are new to the specialty of anesthesia. I reviewed the text with assistance from the medical students who shared my operating lists, and all of us were generally impressed with the book. The writing style is uniformly strong, which makes the book easy to read. Also, the authors convey their enthusiasm for the specialty of anesthesiology as well as for sharing their knowledge, which makes it easy for the reader to become engaged in the book simply by reading through a chapter, or perhaps several chapters.

A set of case studies—one case study for each chapter—is at the beginning of the book, and it is recommended that the case study be read before reading the associated chapter. Using this approach should assist the student reader in gaining the utmost information from the text. Some students enjoyed this approach, while others found it somewhat cumbersome. The individual chapters of the book are subdivided into informatively-titled sections that present comprehensive information on the chapter's topic. Most chapters begin with a set of learning objectives, and there is a two or three-page discussion based on the case study at the end of each chapter. For the most part, these discussions are skillfully prepared; they provide excellent insight into the chapter's material, and they expand on some of the information presented. This design limits the book's usefulness as a quick reference, since the information for each chapter is found in two places, the central part of each chapter and its discussion section.

The book provides extensive coverage of the field of anesthesia. The thirty-two chapters are grouped logically

into seven sections plus two appendices (addressing the American Society of Anesthesiologists' difficult airway algorithm and Malignant Hyperthermia). The medical students found that the technique of allocating a chapter to each of three stages of anesthesia, i.e., "Preoperative Considerations", "Intraoperative Considerations", and "Postoperative Considerations", to be particularly helpful in developing their foundational understanding of approaches to anesthesia.

The data are generally presented in a concise and straightforward manner that is easy to view and understand, although some tables are rather lengthy with a relatively small font. With just over five hundred pages, the text may be daunting to medical students who are pursuing a one or two-week rotation in anesthesia. However, there is sufficient information in individual chapters to facilitate reading them out of sequence on their own. The book can be navigated readily due to its effectively worded table of contents; however, the index is brief and incomplete, for instance, "Patient Controlled Analgesia" (PCA) does not appear in the index. The paragraph on this topic can be found by following the table of contents to the appropriate chapter and then skimming through the chapter's sections.

In Section V, "Systems Physiology and Anesthetic Subspecialties", the chapters are titled by specialty, e.g., "Anesthesia for Urological Surgery". This approach is very useful for students who wish to review a single chapter in anticipation of a day's clinical experience in the operating room, although it does lead to some material being duplicated in more than one chapter or being presented in a fragmented manner in several chapters. Cross referencing is limited, possibly to control the book's length and complexity, but that aspect can make it difficult to find complete information on a topic even though the text incorporates the information.

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In summary, this book serves not only as an excellent resource for students and other learners seeking an introduction to anesthesia but also as a platform for teaching the

basics. It will be a welcome addition to the libraries of teaching departments, and it is best approached as a book to be read as complete chapters.