

### Recent Advances in Surgery 28

Edited by Irving Taylor, Colin Johnson  
RSM Press 2005

Price £35.00. Pp 224

ISBN 1853156108

Each chapter of this book is a concise but comprehensive review of a general surgical topic. This book covers a diverse range of areas and there are chapters devoted to technology in surgical education, abdominal tuberculosis and optimization of the high-risk surgical patient. However, more traditional surgical issues such as inguinal hernia repair, pancreatic disease and carotid endarterectomy are also considered. As with previous volumes from this series the last chapter is a brief review of recent surgical randomized controlled trials.

The topics chosen are genuinely interesting and the book is well written. The

authors have referenced each chapter superbly, quote all the major studies and there is considerable emphasis placed on evidence-based practice. The clinical photographs, tables and figures are clear and relevant.

Throughout the text, key points are highlighted in boxes to allow the reader to rapidly identify the major points of the chapter. However, these key points are repeated again at the end of each chapter in a manner that becomes slightly wearing.

There is probably too much detail here for Membership of the Royal



College of Surgeons candidates but this would be a useful text for those who are soon to sit the general surgical intercollegiate examination. I'm sure every practising surgeon would find something of interest in this book and the final chapter reviewing recent randomized controlled trials is an excellent feature. However, in this era of increasing specialization the diverse range of topics covered in this book may limit its

appeal to some readers.

*John Scollay, Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, Edinburgh*

### Emergencies in Anaesthesia

Edited by Keith G Allman,  
Andrew McIndoe, Iain H Wilson  
Oxford University Press 2005

Price £19.95. Pp 475

ISBN 0198520999

The last few years have seen an exponential rise in the number of handbooks or pocketbooks available to health-care workers, and this new and expanding series of 'Emergencies in...' is just one of the latest editions.

*Emergencies in Anaesthesia* is clearly written primarily for the anaesthetist and suitable for all grades within the speciality. There is a large amount of overlap with the existing handbook for this population, *The Oxford Handbook of Anaesthesia*, although as its title suggests the topics within are centred around acute issues and problems.

All of the emergency scenarios that anaesthetists train for are covered and some of the more bizarre are also discussed. A 2-page spread is used for most topics, as we have become used to from the Oxford Handbook series.

The material is presented in a standard and easily accessible format, although the 'Immediate management' boxes would benefit from offering the reader more succinct management points rather than some of the overly wordy accounts that appear for some scenarios. Equally it is unclear why the authors have chosen to arrange

the first three chapters cardiovascular, respiratory and then airway, rather than the standard advanced life support (ALS) approach of airway, breathing, then circulation; a very minor point from an overly critical reviewer.

The material within this pocket book is academically sound and it is something all anaesthetists should readily have access to. It will become a common sight around theatre for use on a daily basis, and also for juniors to read in preparation for their postgraduate anaesthetic examinations.

*James Dawson, Queen's Medical Centre, Nottingham*

### How Drugs Work (2nd edn)

Hugh McGavock  
Radcliffe 2005

Price £21.95. Pp 171

ISBN 1857756916

This book has been written by a GP, praised for his ability to teach pharmacology in laymen's terms. It aims to provide foundation knowledge to all health-care professionals – both undergraduate and postgraduate – and serve as a teaching and reference aid.

Certainly the bright cover and 171 pages are attractive, as are the diagrams, which serve to break up and complement the text. Chapters are short and content relevant. The book covers a wide range of

topics and flows from one chapter to the next, covering areas such as drug absorption, distribution and metabolism; drugs and the central nervous system; and finally, drug topics of special importance. Comments such as the fourteen nifedipine MR [modified release] preparations having differing absorption and plasma concentration levels, thus requiring the same brand to be prescribed, provide food for thought and manage to recapture one's attention; and each chapter concludes with a key points box, which serve to consolidate it.

Although different drugs are mentioned it is not a guide to prescribing. However, it does raise salient points and considerations pertaining to the elderly and polypharmacy, so may encourage safer and more effective drug prescribing and usage.

The book assumes some basic biology knowledge and builds upon this. Dependant upon the level of knowledge of the reader, the book serves as either an introduction to pharmacology, upon which one can build, or as a point of reference. The content would be too basic for experienced health-care professionals seeking more in-depth answers, although the book does not claim to provide these.

*Simon Colledge, Charge Nurse and Emergency Nurse Practitioner, Queen's Medical Centre, Nottingham*