

## Oxford Handbook of Anaesthesia (4th edn)

**Edited by Keith G Allman, Iain H Wilson**  
**Oxford University Press 2016**  
**Price £34.99. Pp 1266**  
**ISBN 978 0 1998719410**

As the *Oxford Handbook of Anaesthesia* returns in its fourth edition, it seems to have progressed from strength to strength. The book's forty-four chapters provides concise yet comprehensive information on a broad scope of material. Topics range from that relating to 'General considerations', through 'Uncommon conditions' to 'Practical anaesthesia', and cover much of the FRCA exam syllabus for those sitting anaesthetic exams.

The clearly laid-out chapters, written by experts in their respective sub-specialities, provide easy to digest reading material. Clearly labelled tables and figures add to the clarity, particularly in the 'Regional anaesthesia' chapter where anatomical diagrams and ultrasound images accompany

block descriptions. The 'Anaesthetic emergencies' chapter includes helpful action plans and algorithms to aid lucidity in what can often be time-critical yet stressful situations. The penultimate chapter contains an extensive drug formulary detailing bolus doses and infusion guides, providing an excellent aide memoire.

The book aims to provide 'a practical guide to anaesthesia written for those who have mastered basic anaesthetic techniques', and this edition goes above and beyond. Perhaps its only shortcoming is the size of the pockets required to accommodate it. While many of us may recall from our medical student days that the 'cheese and onion' should never be situated more than one arm's length away, both the aspiring and veteran anaesthetist could say the same for this book.

*Edward Gilbert-Kawai, Princess Alexandra Hospital, Harlow*



## ECG from Basics to Essentials: Step by Step

**Roland X Stroobandt, S Serge Barold,**  
**Alfons F Sinnaeve**  
**Wiley-Blackwell 2016**  
**Price £43.99. Pp 431**  
**ISBN 978 1 119 06641 5**

As a junior doctor still early in my training, I was looking forward to brushing up my knowledge of electrocardiograms (ECGs) by reading this book. Unfortunately I finished the book more confused about ECGs than ever before.

Written by three emeritus professors, this book seeks to cover all aspects of the ECG and cardiac abnormalities using a step-by-step approach, with hundreds of illustrations and a companion website. It is aimed at everyone from medical students to consultants.

The title is misleading – few parts of the book are basic and most of it is not essential. Not until the very last chapter (page 408/423) is there a step-by-step guide on 'How to read an ECG', which to me seems the most important part of an ECG book.

The book meanders through different sections; anatomy and physiology, p waves and atrial enlargement, coronary

artery disease and acute coronary syndrome, electrolyte abnormalities and antiarrhythmic drugs etc. Despite the wide scope and potential to be great, it somehow falls short of the mark.

The key selling points highlighted on the back of the book are the illustrations and presentation. I found the illustrations often too complex and they confused rather than helped. They were poorly labelled, it was difficult to see which part of the text was referring to which graphic and abbreviations weren't explained until pages later.

Sadly I cannot recommend this book. I feel I need to read another ECG book to unravel the confusion this one caused.  
*Elizabeth Gilham, Bassetlaw Hospital, South Yorkshire*

## Strategic Scientific and Medical Writing

**Pieter H Joubert, Silvia M Rogers**  
**Springer 2015**  
**Price £53.99. Pp 140**  
**ISBN 978 3 662 48315 2**

This book is not quite what its title says: it is not a text regarding scientific writing, it is a text on writing official documents for drug trials and pharmacological developments,

which it does in a clear, comprehensive and adequate manner. It also covers use of statistics and statistical graphics in a clear and helpful way, that might be of use to early-career writers without much experience in these areas. However, it has tried to extend into other types of scientific writing, such as peer-reviewed publications and dissertations. In this it does not succeed and any mention of this type of writing feels like an after-thought to the main book.

The book also comes across as rather quaint and naïve – for example, the authors assert the importance of using word processing software and web-based resources, which seems amusingly out of date. It then tries to explain the intricacies and complexities of English grammar and style in 22 pages – it would have been better to remove this section entirely.

Each chapter starts with a well-known quote from a famous author. Unfortunately, the book lacks that which makes these authors so successful – flare, individual style and personality. This is a technically adequate text for those producing drug trial documents, but does not achieve much beyond this.

*Anna M Rose, UCL Institute of Ophthalmology, London*