

Medicine for Anaesthetists (4th edn)

Edited by MD Vickers and I Power
Blackwell Science 1999
Price £79.50. Pp 415
ISBN 0 865 42637 6

This, the fourth edition of a textbook of medicine aimed at anaesthetists, remains a comprehensive yet moderate sized and easily read book. It has now been extensively rewritten, with medical conditions in pregnancy being much expanded, and problems with drug abuse and anaesthesia a new inclusion.

Each chapter is written by an anaesthetist (from the UK or Australia) with an interest in the field in question, in collaboration with relevant specialists. In general, the book concentrates on basic clinical assessment such as would be obtained by the bedside and relevant investigations.

Disease pathophysiology is comprehensively covered in a clear and understandable manner. Emphasis is placed on common medical conditions. It includes information on preoperative medical management and anaesthetic risk assessment. More rare conditions are also covered, for example there is an excellent chapter on congenital heart disease. There is, where necessary, comprehensive referencing of relevant studies enabling in depth reading of areas of interest. If there is any major weakness it is in its' coverage of specialist investigations and treatments.

It will be of particular use to trainee anaesthetists studying for the FRCA exams, but would also be useful for general reference. In essence, this is a well-written concise book which will provide the anaesthetist with a sound background in medicine.

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Challenge Epilepsy: New Antiepileptic Drugs

Edited by Hermann Stefan, Gunter Kramer, Bruno Mamoli
Blackwell Science 1998
Price £39.50. Pp 258
ISBN 3 89412 385 0

Since 1989 eight new antiepileptic drugs (AEDs) have been licensed worldwide for the management of patients with intractable epilepsy and there are numerous other drugs in advanced clinical development. This multi-authored book is the report of a meeting of recognized international experts who were brought together to discuss the various 'challenges' of the new AEDs. Although the book is not divided into sections, three broad themes can be teased.

The first relates to pharmacology and the important issues of AED mechanisms of action, pharmacokinetics and drug interactions. The second relates to clinical experience in adults, infants and children and in the elderly and

includes drug indications, monotherapy and combination therapy experience and associated cognitive side-effects.

The third relates to the challenges: three chapters are devoted to clinical trial design and the challenges associated with not only designing standards for comparing drugs using currently available drug designs but also the development of monotherapy therapeutic equivalence trials. Epilepsy in the elderly is an often neglected subject, even though evidence would suggest an increasing incidence that exceeds that of children. A substantive chapter deals with the pathology of epilepsy in the elderly and the rather limited data on the use of the new AEDs in this group.

As the cost of the new AEDs is substantial compared to the long established AEDs, pharmacoeconomic considerations in disease management are increasingly being highlighted. The chapter dealing with this subject is innovative and illustrated with some impressive schematics. Finally, the chapter on the genetics of seizures and possible use of genetic markers as an index of AED efficacy, is indeed a challenge. This book provides a valuable update on the present role, use and characteristics of the new AEDs and highlights the various issues currently being debated in relation to the AEDs of the future.

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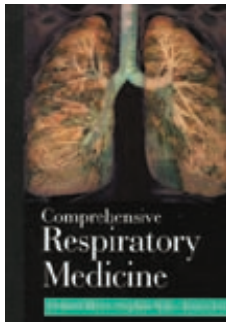
Comprehensive Respiratory Medicine

Edited by Richard Albert, Stephen Spiro, James Jett
Mosby 1999
Price £99.95. Pp 800
ISBN 0 7234 3118 3

This is a new major textbook of respiratory medicine and in reviewing the book I must declare a potential conflict of interest. I am a joint editor of another major textbook of respiratory medicine and have tried hard to remain strictly objective in this review while benefiting from the experience of putting together such a book and knowledge of the difficulties, advantages and drawbacks involved.

A quick superficial skim through this book shows a quite exceptionally high standard of layout and presentation. Almost every page contains illustrations, tables and figures which break up the text in an attractive way and make the book more readable and friendly. The quality of the illustrations is very high and colour is used throughout. Morbid anatomy and histopathology is provided in much greater abundance than is usual in a textbook of medicine and the choice and finish of the material cannot be faulted.

Similarly, there are large numbers of chest X-rays and computed tomographs which support the text and give the reader essential clinical information. These are generally of high quality, although there are occasional lapses. Tables and lists are attractively presented and are almost always useful, although some of the flow diagrams were inevitably more entertaining for the author to design than for the reader to analyse. There is a scattering of clinical photographs showing such things as skin lesions or the appearances at thoracoscopy. These are of more decorative than educational value, as is a jar containing lung lavage from alveolar proteinosis and a picture of a cotton carding machine. Line drawings are appropriate and clear and from the point of view of visual impact and information, this book is way ahead of any competitors.



The initial chapters on structure and function are of the highest standard: the first 56 pages on imaging are superb and could stand alone as a monograph. Pulmonary physiology and lung function testing is handled from a clinical viewpoint and the author has been unusually self-controlled in keeping some of the more arcane mathematics of pulmonary physiology to himself. So far very good — editors of rival textbooks can be forgiven for going weak at the knees.

After fairly conventional sections on investigative techniques and the principles of respiratory care, both of which are very well suited to the highly visual approach praised above, the book settles down to a fairly conventional handling of pulmonary diseases. The individual chapter authors are all international experts in their field and the editors have done well to keep the style and presentation consistent throughout. At this point, however, the book positions itself halfway between a short undergraduate textbook and a major specialist tome. The common diseases are handled well in the usual way and can neither be faulted nor extravagantly praised. Tuberculosis is handled from an American point of view and bacille Calmette-Guérin (BCG) vaccination is not recommended. In contrast the management of lung tumours is very much an international consensus and the difficult issues surrounding chemotherapy for advanced disease are handled in a balanced and commonsense way.

An inevitable consequence of the somewhat limited scope of the book is its handling of rare disease or unusual complications of common ones. The handling is somewhat superficial and while entirely adequate for an exam answer, these sections may be disappointing if the book is consulted for help in a difficult case, or for presenting at a clinical meeting. Dipping at random into the book for guidance with this week's clinical problems I was not helped in the management of empyema nor in the diagnosis of histoplasmosis. Fine as an undergraduate text but less good for reference. The references themselves are up-to-date and appropriate to the scope of the book, but not comprehensive.

Overall, this is one of the most attractively packaged textbooks that I have seen and is certain to sell well. It is better as a textbook to learn from than for reference but I am certain that it is guaranteed high sales and a long future.

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