

BOOK REVIEWS

The Management of Pain, with Special Emphasis on the Use of Analgesic Block in Diagnosis, Prognosis and Therapy. BY JOHN J. BONICA, M.D. Pp. 1533; 785 Illustrations. Philadelphia, Lea and Febiger, 1953.

Sometime during the summer of 1950 I received a letter from Author John Bonica which was not of especial interest except for what, in retrospect, has proved to be an understatement of such magnitude that it seems hardly credible. He said, in part, "I believe that I shall proceed with the writing of a *short monograph* on the management of pain along the lines which we have so often discussed." This tongue-in-cheek hoax is further amplified in the opening sentence of the Preface which reads, "The purpose of this book is to present in one volume a *concise* but complete (sic!) discussion of the fundamental aspects of pain. . . ."

Some three years later his publisher confronted a startled and astonished medical public with this volume, more than fifteen hundred pages long, illuminated by 785 superb illustrations and anchored by almost half a thousand figures: net weight more than 7 pounds.

To review such a tome with any reasonable amount of circumspection and a degree of detachment deserved by its ubiquitous ramifications is almost impossible.

This volume contains, in effect, three major books between its two covers. They are not all of equal merit but any one of them could stand alone with distinction.

It is said that current fashion favors little thin black books of one kind or another, too frequently thin in content as well as substance.

It is of especial interest, therefore, to find that the publishers of this volume, defying fashion, have produced a book which is superbly constructed, and hence, a pleasure to handle and read in spite of its bulk.

The paper is excellent, the format is attractive, the photographs and illustrations are sharply reproduced without fuzziness, "snow" or distortion. They have been selected with obvious care so that the contiguous text is consistently supported and clarified.

Now for the contents.

Dr. Bonica has elected to make an arbitrary but logical division of his material into three parts, viz., the fundamental aspects of pain; the methods and techniques of managing pain, and a systematic discussion of disease entities which have pain as a major symptom. In this third group the author discusses the utility and applicability as well as the limitations of specific definitive pain-relieving procedures, with particular emphasis upon what he chooses to call "analgesic blocks."

Very early it becomes apparent to the reader that the author entertains a major preference for nerve blocks as the *sine qua non* of therapeutic measures available to the physician and that the discussions of other procedures or methods are, for the most part, introduced as ancillary measures. There is much to be said in favor of this approach and, in any event, the almost incredible comprehensiveness of the author's explorations into all the recesses of the subject of pain precludes any justifiable criticism of neglect.

The author has called upon several of his colleagues in specialized fields to

discuss those aspects of pain management peculiar to their specialties. There are chapters on roentgen therapy, orthopedic methods for pain relief, physical, medical and neurosurgical procedures for the management of pain and the characteristics of pain consequent to peripheral vascular disease.

Dr. Herbert S. Ripley, of the University of Washington School of Medicine, has contributed two chapters, one devoted to "Psychotherapeutic Methods in the Management of Pain" and another on "The Psychologic Basis of Pain."

Dr. Ripley's chapters are authoritative but his adherence to a somewhat inflexible academic style might have resulted in a relative defect in the overall structure of the book as it was apparently conceived and written, had not the author reserved for himself the prerogative of elaborating upon the theme of the psychology of pain and its hosts rather indiscriminantly throughout the text. With this arrangement I agree wholeheartedly. The psychological implications in pain problem cases are probably of greater importance, although understood less than any other facet of the pain experience.

The author cannot be found to be negligent in applying himself freely and vigorously throughout almost all of the text to any phase of the problems of pain management that can be utilized to illustrate the overwhelming importance of kindness, patience, tenacity and the intelligent analysis of each case individually.

This, I believe, is the talisman of the book and, although tautology is rampant everywhere except in the discussion of strictly technical procedures, the tautology never seems trite.

As far as I am aware, this is the first text on this subject in which the personal convictions of the author concerning the physician's responsibilities and

opportunities for doing real good in adverse circumstances are forcefully, rationally, and repeatedly stated.

The author's scathing denunciation of dilettantes in the field of pain management is acrid as he says, "The deplorable attitude of defeatism and apathetic therapeutic inactivity must be abandoned and replaced by courageous aggressiveness tempered by sane judgment."

For the most part, the writing is lucid and forceful. The block techniques described are orthodox and apparently have proved reliable for the author. There is an ample sprinkling of case reports to illustrate specific points of discussion without invoking the tedium of impertinent minutiae.

One would, of course, appear naive in failing to see and report some defects in this book. The proofreading has been so efficiently done that typographical errors are rare, indeed, in spite of its size. To cite the author's occasionally free conversion of adjectives into nouns as, for example, the repeated and irritating use of the term "pharmacologicals" is probably petty criticism. I suppose that such lapses as the use of terms such as specialties when specialists is intended or at least correct may be attributed to the surge of the enthusiasm of the moment.

The section on "The Management of Pain in Terminal Malignancy" is especially well written. The classification of the mechanisms of pain in cancer cases as presented by the author contributes greatly to a ready analysis of the pain pathways involved in any cancer case and to an accurate estimation of their most vulnerable site for nerve blocks.

One might be even more pleased with this section were there a more complete discussion of the philosophical and ethical implications inherent in assuming the calculated risk in patients with cancer pain as, for example, when do-

ing gasserian ganglion blocks with alcohol or injecting long-acting agents such as phenol, efocaine[®], or butesin repository into the substance of neoplasms involving the spine or adjacent soft tissue.

The third section of the book, that is, that having to do with specific pain syndromes, is so pregnant with detail and description that it is the practical equivalent to a "system" of medicine and surgery. There are, for example, 7 pages of a fine print table devoted to the etiology and differential diagnosis of backache and back pain, so arranged that the quality, site, duration, and so forth of the pain can quickly be oriented with associated signs and symptoms. Although this type of material does not usually lend itself to such documentation, the particular table in question appears to be of real merit.

The author has commendably been conservative and impartial in his discussion of the agents used for nerve blocks. This is especially true of the longer-acting agents.

A comprehensive glossary of the terms used in discussions pertaining to pain and its management would have been a valuable addendum to this book. The authenticity inherent in its inclusion here might have done much to standardize the use of terms which are presently applied to procedures or phenomena on no more authority than the whim of the writer or speaker. Confusion between terms such as prophylactic versus prognostic blocks, for example, or the relative suitability of dolorimeter versus odynometer might thus have been established.

There have been, in my estimation, two really valuable books on pain published in English prior to Dr. Bonica's "Management." The first was John Hilton's "Rest and Pain," published originally in 1865 in London and reprinted in 1950 in a very handsome replica of the first edition. The other

book is that incomparable little black handbook entitled simply, "Pain," written by H. G. Wolff and S. Wolf and published in 1948. This must not be confused with the compendium of the same title, published in 1943 as a composite report from the Association for Research in Nervous and Mental Diseases, and edited by Dr. Wolff.

The "Management of Pain" by Bonica cannot rightfully be compared to any other book. It is unique in this field and its uniqueness is so unequivocal that there is really no other book with which to compare it.

Since the author has elected to discuss in detail the significance of pain as a symptom in almost every conceivable syndrome of which it may form a part, the book serves to best advantage as a reference work to which one may turn for specific information concerning not only the nature of the pain involved, but also what measures are considered by the author most likely to afford lasting relief. These attributes make the index of particular importance, and, in this respect, the book's contents have been carefully, intelligently, and comprehensively catalogued.

It is, of course, unfortunate that the very considerable cost of producing a volume such as this automatically places it outside the budget of many students and hospital house officers. Practicing physicians in any capacity must almost inevitably encounter patients with pain. The tenacity, artistry, and almost incredible industry of Dr. John Bonica have resulted in the setting down in this remarkable book all the information presently available concerning the subject in all its facets, and, what is of infinitely greater importance, its 1,533 pages are brimming from beginning to end with the philosophy of success in the management of pain. They reflect the inexorable convictions of the author that

the essential humanity and "goodness" of a physician can be confronted with no challenge greater than that encountered in the patient suffering from intractable pain.

The "Introduction" to this book is misnamed. The material presented is actually a chronological development of the history of man's efforts to understand the inscrutability of pain and to devise effective methods for the relief of patients suffering from pain. It is superbly written. Its lyric prose has only rarely been surpassed in medical literature, written in English. I presume that the historical references are authentic, but even if they were pure myth, this chapter would still be delightful reading.

This is the final paragraph of the chapter: "What then is our present position in this problem? It is one of exerting greater effort and expanding greater energy in an attempt to solve the mystery of pain. The forces of the anatomist, neurophysiologist, pharmacologist, and other laboratory investigators are joined with those of the clinician, and some day—we hope very soon—man will learn about the nature of his most vexing perennial problem—pain. Meanwhile, all physicians must concern themselves with this problem, for pain is the day by day business of every doctor. We must make an effort to give the various painful states an intelligent appraisal; and, perhaps equally important, we must formulate a systematic plan for relief which will conserve the patients' social usefulness in so far as possible. In other words, we must manage pain as best we can, for even if in a crude and empirical manner we can alleviate some patients of their suffering, our efforts will be worth while. The proper management of pain remains, after all, the most important obligation, the main objective, and the crowning achievement of every physician."

I have been told that the ultimate accolade for an author is that which is inherent and implied by the frank statement, "I wish I had written that book."

F. A. DUNCAN ALEXANDER, M.D.

The Practical Management of Pain in Labour. BY W. D. WYLIE, M.A., M.B. Pp. 148; 42 illustrations. Chicago, Year Book Publishers, Inc., 1953.

The problems of pain peculiar to obstetrics usually occupy only a chapter in texts on anesthesia. In this book this subject is given attention more commensurate with its importance.

Dr. Wylie speaks with conviction, and this conviction springs not only from a thorough knowledge of theory but also from a wide practical experience with this essentially practical subject. He addresses himself to a wide circle of readers, although not to the finished anesthesiologist, who will look for a more exhaustive treatise. But there are others—obstetricians, both tyro and expert, and certainly all general practitioners—to whom this book will be what the author hopes: a helpful and stimulating review of obstetric analgesia.

It is a small book, as books go, and not an artistic masterpiece. Like its subject, its physical form is practical: There is a meager bibliography. Illustrations are simple but adequate. The preface contains a lamentable apology for "my lamentable syntax," which the reviewer thought was quite unnecessary. Although heartily disliking the word "unco-operation" (p. 20), I find the author's style on the whole quite effective—pleasingly simple and direct.

The subject matter is comprehensive in scope but, of necessity, limited in detail. Anatomy, physiology and pharmacology are summarized, but one questions whether the bare 14 lines devoted