

Book Reviews

Self-Assessment in Anesthesiology. BY A. W. GROGONO AND T. H. HOWELLS. England, William Heinemann Med. Books, Ltd., 1975. Pages: 145. Price: \$9.95 (paperback).

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This book is a compendium of multiple-choice questions compiled by two British anesthetists. The questions are arranged in nine groups according to subject area. The questions are not unlike those used by many examining organizations in the United States, and each question is provided with an answer and some discussion on the overleaf side of the page containing the questions.

As a list of questions with answers this book will provide help in inventorying one's knowledge. It has as advantages the fact that it is a small book which can be readily used and it will be handy to fill small amounts of available time. It is also advantageous to have the answers with some discussion located immediately after the questions. The answers are brief and, in general, quite clearly, concisely written.

The title is a bit misleading. I would expect a book published under the title, "Self-Assessment," to enable me to assess my level of information in various areas in the subject of anesthesia. This book only partially fulfills this expectation because the subject areas are incompletely covered and, I believe, poorly cataloged. I make these statements with considerable sympathy for the authors. I spent several years on the Examinations Committee of the American Board of Anesthesiology and I am thoroughly aware of the difficulties in constructing a satisfying grid for material in this or any other specialty.

I find a section on anatomy that deals with the respiratory system with one question concerning the innervation of the larynx, and includes the circulatory system not at all, to be a poor provider of assessment of my knowledge of anatomy relevant to anesthesia. To look at a table of contents and find a section labeled "Anaesthesia and Equipment," does not help me much in finding areas for study.

The multiple-choice question (MCQ) is well established in the United States but less so in the United Kingdom, I believe. This book, therefore, is probably more appropriate in that country, where it would serve a valuable function in acquainting candidates for examination with the multiple-choice question technique. The book was first published in 1975 in Britain under the title of *MCQ Tutor For Anesthetists*.

A deficiency of multiple-choice questions is inflexibility. I refer to the fact that controversy is not well examined. The authors recognize this in the introduction, but perhaps contribute to the rigidity by some rather definite statements in controversial areas. As an example, it is categorically stated that hyperkalemia is a contraindication to succinylcholine. There are data that argue this point and occasionally the most well read candidate will, therefore, be penalized. Bibliographic references are not provided in areas of controversy and this approach may, therefore, fail in this aspect of its teaching purpose. Many answers can be debated, but this will be true of any question-answer list.

The book has not been edited for American consumption, but the common language barrier is not overwhelming, at least to one who has spent some time in Britain. Lignocaine, amethocaine, pethidine and the few other words not widely shared on the two sides on the Atlantic will not seriously compromise the function of this book.

The book may serve as a reminder of areas of incomplete or absent knowledge. As such, it helps in self-assessment, even if incomplete.

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Correlative Neuroanatomy and Functional Neurology. 16th edition. BY J. G. CHUSID. Los Altos, Lange Medical Publications, 1976. Pages: 448. Price: \$10.00.

This textbook is directed to the beginner in clinical neurology and is supposed to serve as a supplement to neurologic texts and literature. As its title suggests, it fits somewhere between a neuroanatomy tome and a clinical neurology text. The book is profusely illustrated (more than 400) with tables and reprints of figures drawn from many sources. While many of these illustrations provide useful diagrammatic summaries of pertinent anatomy and physiology, others are of poor quality, usually being overcrowded and confusing. In most instances, the anatomic detail is complete. A review of the chapters on muscle testing and sensory innervation should rapidly provide one with the skills required to define the effects of regional anesthesia or peripheral neuropathies.

The physiologic interpretations rendered in many chapters of the book are dated, incomplete, or erroneous. For instance, in Chapter I, which attempts an all-inclusive synopsis of the anatomy and physiology of the brain, the author states that there is very little extracellular space in the brain. While this subject was controversial a decade ago, it is now established that brain extracellular space does not differ greatly from that found in the rest of the body. The discussion on cerebral blood-flow physiology is superficial. There is only a brief mention that regional cerebral blood-flow studies can be performed in patients with cerebrovascular disease, and no summary of the extensive recent literature in this area. Inter-mixed with an elementary discussion of neurochemistry are a number of very sophisticated tables (from other texts) enumerating the various chemical constituents of brain structures. There is very poor integration of modern concepts in neurologic disease with the more classic anatomic information, which leads to very choppy reading. This may be the result of a single-authored book now in its 16th edition, which needs to be rewritten entirely rather than partially amended to maintain a facade of modernity. Being based primarily upon other reviews and texts, the book provides no access to current literature and, somewhat disturbingly, provides no reference citations within the body of the text.

Most anesthesiologists recognize the general high quality of the Lange paperback series and the success of the publisher in providing a concise medical library for the practitioner and student. They expect to find current, pithy and concise reviews of the literature in specialty fields covered by the Lange series. "Correlative Neuroanatomy and Functional Neurology" does not live up to the overall high standards of this series. Although this is a relatively inexpensive book, I believe that much of the information it contains can be found in the standard neuroanatomic and clinical neurology texts which it is meant to supplement. Short, circumscribed paperback reviews such as Katz's monograph on "Nerve, Muscle and Synapse" and Manter and Gatz's "Clinical Neuroanatomy and Neurophysiology" would better fulfill the goals defined by the author.

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