

Book Reviews

B. Raymond Fink, M.D., Editor

Anesthesia for Neurological Surgery. BY K. P. GEEVARGHESE. Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1977. Pages: 350. Price: \$35.00.

In the preface the editor states that his aim is not to cover the entire subject of neuroanesthesia but to present a wide range of topics on the subject, with emphasis on basic considerations and care of patients. He has succeeded very well indeed in this up-to-the-minute volume.

All major problems in anesthetizing neurosurgical patients are discussed and methods for various neurosurgical procedures are presented, together with a rationale for their use. In addition, the proper monitoring of these patients is fully outlined.

Although there are numerous authors, each topic is presented in a clear and concise manner. The editor has generally succeeded in maintaining an overall sense of continuity and style throughout the book.

This book, together with Michenfelder's classic review of neuroanesthesia (ANESTHESIOLOGY 30:65-100, 1969) provide all the necessary information for anesthesiologists in training, or those preparing for board certification, or for the clinician who will be administering anesthesia to neurosurgical patients.

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Practical Techniques in Venipuncture. BY P. E. SCRANTON, JR. Baltimore, Williams and Wilkins, 1977. Pages: 70. Price: \$5.50.

This manual is aimed at providing the professional beginner and paramedical assistant with the practical aspects of the various methods for introducing tubes and needles into veins, whether for infusion administration, monitoring, or phlebotomy.

There are specific chapters on the butterfly, plastic catheters, and phlebotomy, with a special description of the approach to cannulation of major veins. Of interest are the details given about procuring and maintaining venoclysis in the scalp and umbilical veins.

This booklet serves its purpose by providing clues and tips relating to the anatomic references of the most commonly used methods of venipuncture, their variations, and some of the possible complications, but for the purist this manual is plagued with picaresques—the use of trade names of drugs and catheters, interjection of some intern jargon terms, and the inconsistent use of Greek-root spelling of some words and not of others. Although some of these mishaps may, with good will, be overlooked for the sake of maintaining simplicity and practicality, others may be unforgivable. The bibliography at the end is far too small for anyone attempting to use this manual as a reference. The labelling of the infiltration of local anesthetic drugs before the insertion of intravenous catheters as a “misdirected mission of mercy,” the intricate and misguided description of the technique of subclavian-vein catheterization, and the omission of the “J” wire modification for external jugular vein cannulation are serious shortcomings.

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Medicine for Anaesthetists. EDITED BY M. D. VICKERS. Oxford, Blackwell Scientific Publications, and Philadelphia, J. B. Lippincott, 1977. Pages: 571. Price: \$59.50.

The Preface to *Medicine for Anaesthetists* states that for each medical disorder, the anesthesiologist needs to know . . . what it means in terms of function. Can the patient be improved in the time available? How does one decide when the situation is optimal? What else might go wrong with the patient? The intent of this book is, thus, to provide a textbook of medicine from this special perspective.

There is no doubt that virtually all anesthesiologists would value an authoritative work that filled these requirements, and it is, therefore, disappointing to report that we still do not have one.

A serious problem, as with so many multi-authored books, is the unevenness. Some of the chapters are excellent, some acceptable, and some do not appear to have been written with any special perspective in mind. In all, there are 17 chapters, each dealing with a different branch of medicine.

The promise of the preface is immediately dashed by the first chapter, on heart disease. It is largely a catalog of dusty diagnoses, with little that will aid an anesthesiologist confused with the new tools of diagnostic cardiology, or one trying to assess when management is optimal, etc. Heart failure, for example, is discussed in 6½ desultory pages; $\text{Na}^+ - \text{K}^+$ ATPases are mentioned at least twice in this space, but there is no mention of differential diagnosis, assessment of functional reserve, definition of contractility, or diagnostic aids. The discussion of digitalis and its toxicity is inadequate for the sometimes urgent dictates of surgery. Frankly, the chapter is boring, and it is perhaps significant that it is the only one in the book that has no references.

The second chapter, “Vascular Diseases,” is excellent, although it would have been better titled “Hypertension and Ischaemic Heart Disease” because that is its subject matter. The third, “Lung Disease” is also good, but contains some very poor illustrations, some inaccuracies, and a curious disregard for the symbols in general use for respiratory modalities. Respiratory failure is allotted a scant two pages, and a quarter of this space is devoted to high-dose corticosteroid therapy, with the somewhat surprising claim that “most authorities recommend (it) . . .”

The next two chapters, “Renal Disease” and “Liver Disease,” are outstanding. The usual lists of diagnostic labels are replaced by functional differentiations, and the discussion throughout is relevant, well written, and comprehensive. There are some other well-prepared chapters, such as “The Endocrine and Pancreas,” “Pituitary Disease,” “Convective Tissue Disorders,” “Medical Genetics Relevant to Anesthesia,” and “Thyroid and Parathyroid Disease.”

The chapter, “Diseases of the Central Nervous System,” epitomizes those that fail. This is a mini-synopsis containing 80 brain syndromes in 60 pages, with no attempt to convey a general approach to assessment. As a replacement for a standard text, it is inadequate and, for the special requirement of the anesthesiologist, it is inappropriate. The same problem occurs with “Hematological Disorders,” where in 25 pages of anemias there is no discussion of the relevant pathophysiology of the recurrent controversy as to the pros and cons of delaying anesthesia and operation for the treatment of anemia.

The remaining five chapters fall between these two extremes. “Acute Biochemical Disorders” and “Nutritional Disorders” are nicely written, but somewhat incomplete. “Medical Diseases in Pregnancy,” “Peripheral Nervous Disease,” and “Adrenal Disease” are reasonably complete, but make pedestrian reading.