

# Book Reviews

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**Regional Anesthesia: Advances and Selected Topics.** EDITED BY MICHAEL D'A. STANTON-HICKS. Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1978. Pages: 204. Price: PNS.

This book is divided into two sections: four chapters provide a *theoretical* rationale for the safe, clinical application of regional anesthesia; the remaining four offer practical information.

The first chapter contains, perhaps, the most complete and effective comparison available of etidocaine and bupivacaine, based on all published data. For some reason, clinicians seem to have adopted an "either-or" attitude to these two new long-acting drugs. This chapter provides information about the strengths and weaknesses of each, and the indications and relative contraindications for each. The second and third chapters probe the basic theories and computerized models of the pharmacokinetics of the local anesthetic agents and endeavor to correlate these with the few human data available. Although the experts in this field have developed a special interest in the role of the lung, there is little clinically relevant material to be presented. The references do not include the volume *Nonrespiratory Functions of The Lung and Anesthesia*, published 12 months earlier in this series.

The fourth chapter, on pharmacokinetics in obstetrics, contains an excellent up-to-date review of the disposition and transfer of local anesthetics from mother through placenta to fetus. However, so long as the clinical outcome of anesthesia for obstetrics is evaluated by such crude and subjective means as Apgar scores and neurobehavioral signs, the miniscule variations of measured levels of bound and unbound local anesthetics in any of the three compartments remain an intellectual exercise for the "so-called regionalist."

The second portion of the book addresses itself to "... the four regional anesthetic techniques that probably are (and should be) performed most frequently." I suspect many readers will query the omission of spinal anesthesia in favor of intercostal nerve block or even sympathetic nerve blocks. Nonetheless, the excellent clinical information included in these chapters may well convince practitioners they should be doing these blocks.

The chapters on epidural and upper arm blocks are interesting contrasts in their respective excess and paucity of detailed review. The sections on non-surgical uses and special therapeutic indications for epidural block present information not likely to have been previously read by anesthesiologists, particularly in the portion on "endocrine modification" of epidural block. The section of intercostal nerve block advises the use of 1–2 ml 1 per cent etidocaine to improve success, but in our hands such small volumes have produced slower onset and shorter durations than volumes of 4–5 ml. Such high concentrations also are not necessary, and only increase risk of toxicity in a technique known to produce the highest blood levels of all peripheral nerve blocks.

This book will be of interest and benefit to the "regionalist," because it does supply, especially in the chapter on sympathetic blocks, new information not as well summarized in any other publication, and will encourage other anesthesiologists to increase the role of regional anesthesia in their practices.

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**Drugs in Anaesthetic Practice.** Fifth edition. BY M. D. VICKERS, F. G. WOOD-SMITH and H. C. STEWART. Woburn, Mass., Butterworths, USA, 1978. Pages: 604. Price: \$29.95.

Surely this must be the best available anesthesiologic pharmacology text of its size. In this revision, 29 drugs have been deleted and 11 new monographs have been added. Many excellent drugs discussed are available in Europe but have not yet received F.D.A. approval for clinical use in the United States. On the other hand, a few drugs, such as lithium, bretylium and glycopyrrolate, which with advantage could have been included, have been omitted. Naloxone is classified as a system analgesic, and to find the section relating to enzyme induction one must look in the index under "Enzymes inhibition of drugs." Useful for the United States reader is a list of US official and approved names that differ from their UK equivalents.

The format represents an improvement on the previous edition; the pages are longer and easier to read. This book is a first-rate text and a useful reference source for all involved in the practice of anesthesiology.

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**Adverse Response to Intravenous Drugs.** BY J. WATKINS and A. MILFORD WARD. London, Academic Press, 1978. Pages: 188. Price: £8.20.

This monograph consists of abstracts of the 14 papers presented at the University of Sheffield Medical School in 1977, and an appendix discussing the symposium. The first chapter, on pharmacokinetic aspects of the intravenous bolus, sets the stage for general and more specific discussions, of various adverse reactions to intravenous solutions and their additives, plasma substitutes, Althesin, thiopental and other barbiturates. Hypersensitivity, anaphylactoid reactions, and intradermal testing in the diagnosis of allergic reactions are also dealt with. The narcotics—morphine and meperidine—and the muscle relaxants—*d*-tubocurarine and pancuronium—are conspicuous by their absence, because of time constraints in a symposium.

Nevertheless, this small monograph contains a wealth of information useful to both the academically oriented and the practicing anesthesiologist.

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**Yearbook of Anesthesia, 1978.** EDITED BY J. E. ECKENHOFF, A. J. BART, E. A. BRUNNER, H. S. HOLLEY, AND H. W. LINDE. Chicago, Yearbook Medical Publishers, 1978. Price: \$22.95. Pages: 352.

This book consists of close to 250 abstracts of articles on basic sciences and the clinical practice of anesthesia, selected from more