

Book Reviews

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Anesthetic Exposure in the Workplace. By ELLIS N. COHEN. Littleton, Mass. PSG Publishing Co., Inc., 1980. Pages: 210. Price: \$22.50. Price: \$22.50.

This monograph details all the information on the subject of anesthetic exposure in the operating room available until late 1979. Significantly, it is not called "Health Hazard in the Operating Room," although this is obviously the *raison d'être* for the present concern and debate about the importance of scavenging operating rooms.

The book contains a brief but comprehensive chapter on the history of the problem and two admirably illustrated chapters on levels of exposure and methods of control. These two chapters alone should justify the acquisition of this book by anybody who is interested in the state of the art of control of operating room air pollution. The discussion of animal studies and the human health hazards gives a balanced account of the available information and presents all opinions on this controversial subject. Repeatedly the author states that despite the strength of the data presented, a level of caution in interpretation appears warranted. Clearly Dr. Cohen believes that there is a health hazard, but keeps an open mind to different interpretations of the data. The chapters on the involvement of the government and medicolegal aspects of this problem also are extremely useful to anybody who wants complete and accurate information on these aspects.

If there is a weakness in this book, it is in the chapter, "Mechanisms of Toxicity." The author once again has fallen into the "concentration trap." A large amount of information concerning the toxicity of anesthetics in anesthetic concentrations is discussed in this chapter; however, it is not made clear that information about the mechanisms of the toxicity of trace concentrations is not available at the present time. Although the biotransformation of volatile anesthetics to toxic metabolites is a well-established fact, its relationship to chronic toxicity caused by subanesthetic and trace concentrations of anesthetic is not clear.

There is a comprehensive index, which certainly further enhances the value of this little book.

This is a timely and well-balanced account, and I agree with the author's epilog that "it is difficult to mount valid arguments against efforts to reduce waste anesthetic gas exposure."

I recommend this book for the shelf of every anesthesiologist concerned about his or her working environment.

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Trends in Intravenous Anesthesia. EDITED BY J. ANTONIO ALDRETE AND THEODORE H. STANLEY. Miami, Florida, Symposia Specialists, Inc., 1980. Pages: 525. Price: PNS.

This book represents a compilation of papers presented at a symposium at the University of Colorado in 1979. Included is the opportunity to purchase for \$150 an examination which, if successfully passed, entitles the student to 30 hours of category I credit toward the Physicians Recognition Award of the American Medical Association.

The contributors have a distinctly international flavor, with participants from Europe, South America, and Asia, as well as North America. Thus, both anesthetic techniques and drugs not familiar to American anesthetists are discussed in some detail.

Examples include intravenous procaine anesthesia, althesin, propanidid, and minaxolone, as well as some unorthodox drug combinations.

The book is primarily oriented toward the clinician who is or might be interested in using these drugs or drug combinations. Although mechanisms of drug metabolism, pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics are discussed, these subjects are covered in a descriptive manner, rather than emphasizing complex mathematical or basic biochemical mechanisms. In other words, the direction is more "how to" rather than "why," and the reader interested in complex pharmacologic explanations will not be satisfied.

Inherent in this text are some of the difficulties that multi-authored symposia-originated contributions have. These include repeated presentation of similar information under different headings, lack of uniform style and quality, and somewhat peculiar organization, which may have made sense at a symposium, but makes less sense in a textbook.

The book is well printed on high-quality paper, but, again, the multiauthored nature of the book results in a varied approach to figures, though by and large they are well presented, of high contrast, and easily read. The book is probably longer than it need be, but excessive length in this case is less of a sin than brevity.

The self-evaluation quizzes at the ends of most chapters add relatively little to the book, as the questions ask for specific recall of facts rather than testing understanding of concepts. Although possibly included because of a continuing education requirement, they are somewhat amateurishly written, and the book would lose little by their elimination.

In summary, this book may be a useful reference for looking up drugs unfamiliar to and unavailable to American anesthetists. However, its usefulness as a basis for 30 hours of continuing education at a cost of \$150 is questionable.

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General Anesthesia. EDITED BY T. CECIL GRAY, JOHN F. NUNN, AND J. E. UTTING. London, Butterworth and Company, Publishers, Ltd., 1980. Pages: 1843. Price: \$175.00.

There appear to be two divergent trends in the publication of textbooks of anesthesiology. One major thrust, particularly in the last few years, is toward the publication of small, single-purpose monographs on various topics within the field. In spite of the attractiveness of small treatises written by experts in a subspecialty area, there remain several general-purpose texts: these still attempt to embrace the entire field of anesthesiology. The popularity of these tomes is attested to by frequent revisions and republications. This fourth edition of *General Anesthesia*, in which Dr. J. E. Utting has joined the editorial effort, is the most ambitious yet undertaken.

Make no mistake about it: this book, which purports to treat only general anesthesia, is a *magnum opus*. Its 94 chapters, with an average of 20 pages/chapter, fill two massive volumes to almost overflowing. Lack of portability limits use of this work as a handbook; however, the amount of space devoted to each topic has allowed a detailed reference treatment ordinarily found only in monographs. In addition, the clarity of exposition and of illustrations generally is very good.