

BOOK REVIEW

Edward Lowenstein, M.D., Editor

Manual of Obstetric Anesthesia. EDITED BY GERARD W. OSTHEIMER.
New York, Churchill Livingstone, 1984. Pages: 424. Price: \$27.50.

This recent addition by Churchill Livingstone to their series of manuals in anesthesia fills a void in the obstetric anesthesia literature. This multiauthor text provides an overview of the clinical practice of obstetric anesthesia, with appropriate discussions of the scientific and physiologic principles on which it is based. It is compact, eminently readable, and ideal for anesthesia residents beginning their obstetric rotation, medical students, obstetricians, and anesthesiologists who only infrequently care for the parturient. It makes no claims to be a comprehensive textbook, and for the Board candidate and the anesthesiologist responsible for high-risk patients it does not replace more complete works such as those edited by Albright or Shnider and Levinson.

The management of labor and assessment of the fetus before and during labor are particularly well covered; a simple, clear guide to interpretation of the fetal heart monitor is presented. An understanding of these issues is vital to the anesthesiologist, both for the provision of good clinical care and for survival in the highly litigious climate prevalent in modern obstetrics. The chapters on perinatal pharmacology, maternal mortality, and medicolegal liability also are excellent and complement the more routine discussions on the administration of regional and general anesthesia. The latter understandably reflect the experience and prejudices of the editor and contributing authors, most of whom were trained or currently practice at the Brigham and Women's Hospital. While my own prejudices frequently differ from those at that august institution, one must applaud their excellent statistics relating to patient safety; they report that in caring for more than

150,000 parturients during the last 25 years, not one maternal death was directly related to anesthesia.

An unavoidable shortcoming of this book relates to the fact that some issues currently of great interest, for example the neurotoxicity of chloroprocaine and the cardiotoxicity of bupivacaine, were poorly understood at the time of writing and, hence, are not well covered. Similarly, much of the literature relating to the use of epidural and spinal opioids in obstetric practice has appeared in the last two years. As this book is, in general, well referenced and does not avoid controversial issues (such as the relevance of neurobehavioral testing of neonates), it is to be expected that these topics will be addressed in the second edition. I also would plead for a more in-depth treatment of anesthesia for the high-risk parturient, particularly the mother with preeclampsia. This information would considerably expand the usefulness of this work and could be included without enlarging the book by omitting some of the material on newborn abnormalities, most of which appears in standard pediatric anesthesia texts.

In summary, this book will be valuable as a basic text for anyone who practices obstetric anesthesia. I also recommend it for departmental libraries, but I am sure that because of its usefulness and portability, it will be stolen immediately! Fortunately, its moderate price brings it within the realm of even the most impoverished resident.

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