

BOOK REVIEW

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Handbook of Spinal Anaesthesia and Analgesia. By B. G. Covino, D. B. Scott, and D. H. Lambert. Philadelphia, W. B. Saunders, 1994. Pages: 168. Price: \$79.00.

The high quality of the *Handbook of Spinal Anaesthesia and Analgesia* is a fitting tribute to Dr. B. G. Covino. This book is in the same format as another book, the *Handbook of Epidural Anaesthesia and Analgesia*, by these authors. Some of the chapters in this book on spinal anesthesia, by necessity of subject matter, overlap with those of their other book on epidural anesthesia. The current book on spinal anesthesia is divided into six sections: anatomic, physiologic, pharmacologic, technical, and clinical considerations, and complications of spinal anesthesia. This book is a superb practical guide to spinal anesthesia and analgesia.

The most striking aspect of this book is the first-rate illustration by Poul Bucköj, M.D. Bucköj's illustrations contain just enough intricate detail and color to relay the information without being overly complicated and difficult to decipher. They quickly and easily convey the information intended by the authors. Also included are photographs of anatomic dissection models supplied by Erling Worm Skole, M.D., with one model as the cover photograph. Whereas many anatomic dissection models are bland in color, making it difficult to differentiate structures, this is not the case here. In this book, the models are well dissected, and although the vessels are color-coded, the colors do not overwhelm the models. The only negative aspect of the dissection models was the small size of the photographs. The large cover photograph clearly shows the details visible in the models, but the photographs of the anatomic models in the text are considerably smaller and the details are not so easily discerned.

As pointed out above, there is considerable redundancy of subject in the first three chapters on anatomic, physiologic, and pharmacologic considerations in the book on spinal anesthesia and the companion book on epidural anesthesia. In this book, the chapters have been rewritten and several sections expanded, such as the physiology of sensory afferent pathways. Their descriptions and illustrations of the dorsal horn anatomy and the ascending pain pathways are among the clearest and most easily understood that I have encountered.

In the chapter on technical considerations, the authors clearly explain and illustrate the midline, paramedian, and lumbosacral approaches to spinal anesthesia, as well as the continuous spinal and combined spinal and epidural anesthesia techniques. The authors also discuss the recent controversy concerning microcatheters for spinal anesthesia. In the chapter on clinical considerations, the authors present the advantages of spinal anesthesia: blockade of the surgical stress response, decreased blood loss, and decreased thromboembolism. They also discuss the use of spinal anesthesia for obstetrics, pediatrics, and pain therapy. This chapter further contains guidelines on the choices of local anesthetic solutions for spinal anesthesia. The authors categorize operative procedures as those above or below the first lumbar dermatome and make general recommendations for concentrations and quantities of hyperbaric, isobaric, and hypobaric solutions for the various surgical locations depending on the duration of surgery. These recommendations are beneficial to residents or to the practicing anesthesiologist who only infrequently performs spinal anesthesia.

The final chapter discusses the complications of spinal anesthesia. The authors discuss the causes, prevention, and treatment of the commonly occurring complications of hypotension and postdural puncture headache associated with spinal anesthesia, as well as the less frequently occurring neurologic complications.

The *Handbook of Spinal Anaesthesia and Analgesia* is a practical book for residents learning the techniques of spinal anesthesia or experienced anesthesiologist needing a concise, practical, up-to-date reference on spinal anesthesia and analgesia. This superbly illustrated book is a useful addition to the library of any anesthesiologist who performs spinal anesthesia.

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