Radiographic Imaging for Regional Anaesthesia and Pain Management

P. P. Raj, L. Lou, S. Ervine, P. S. Staats
Churchill Livingstone: Edinburgh, UK, 2003, 335 pp; indexed, illustrated
ISBN: 0-443-06596-9; Price £56.95

It was a pleasure to be able to review this interventional procedural manual for regional anaesthesia and pain management. I have shown the book to a number of my colleagues, all of whom are in agreement that it is of a high standard and is the sort of book that should be available for reference in most Pain Management Centres, particularly those with a commitment to teaching and education.

The introductory chapters on basic physics of radiology, equipment, safety and drugs are particularly useful and so rarely covered by manuals of this size. It is also helpful that the physics behind and the principals of lesioning are also discussed at some length.

The sections on specific nerve blocks are well written with clear line diagrams and good quality radiographs. The illustrations are clearly labelled and easy to follow. As with all procedural manuals, personal idiosyncrasies creep in, but the text is supported with a good list of references.

As well as the usual contents found in this sort of book – anatomy, indications, technique and complications – there are useful sections on ‘helpful hints’ and ‘efficacy’ within each chapter. The reference section following each procedure is a good starting point for further reading.

Whereas this book should not be used without adequate training, it is an excellent manual for both the novice and the experienced practitioner. I am certainly referring to it, even for those procedures that are routine in my practice, so as to gain some helpful hints.

A. Baranowski
London, UK

Anaesthesia and Critical Care: An Exam Revision Companion

C. Dodds, N. Soni

Yet another examination revision companion! Books of this genre appear to function as a kind of talismanic comfort blanket with their publishing success relying on examinees’ ‘perceived omission neurosis’. This is the pre-examination compulsion to buy as many revision books as possible, in the misguided hope that the answers to all possible examination questions are contained within their contents. Failure to read any of the books automatically portends a disastrous examination outcome. This seems, however, to take no account of whether the examinee actually has time to read the books in depth, or not!

For a revision aid to justify praise, it needs to stand out from the crowd. A book of 5000 multiple choice questions (MCQs), for example, would be noteworthy. However, this book follows a rather tired old format: 3 sets of 90 MCQs, 8 sets of 12 short answer questions and 4 sets of 10 clinical scenarios. The MCQs are relatively standard, and roughly of a difficulty similar to that encountered in the Final Fellowship
Examination of the Royal College of Anaesthetists in the UK. The short answer questions cover standard topics and are well referenced for further reading. The ‘clinical scenarios’ are the most impressive part of the book, common questions with well-structured and educational answers. The information provided is up to date and comprehensive throughout, the diagrams clear and relevant.

In summary, no better, no worse than the myriad of other titles in the examination revision stable. My advice: ‘save your money and spend your time thinking about answers, rather than trying to cram them by rote!’

S. M. White
Brighton, UK

Textbook of Obstetric Anesthesia

R. Collis, F. Plaat, J. Urquhart (eds)
ISBN: 1-90015-177-4; Price £45.00

This book is edited by three well-known English obstetric anaesthetists aided by 17 contributors. Set out with well-organized chapters, the text is easy to read and presents a comprehensive overview of obstetric anaesthesia and analgesia in an ‘easygoing’ form.

The book may be divided into three sections. The first section deals with the history of obstetric analgesia and anaesthesia, then goes on to describe maternal physiology, audit problems, non-regional and regional analgesia for labour and anaesthesia for Caesarean section. The second section includes anaesthesia for the distressed fetus, intra-partum fetal monitoring, the parturient with cardiac, respiratory, and neurological diseases and concludes with a chapter on pre-eclampsia. The third section deals with intensive care, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, amniotic fluid embolism, anaesthesia during pregnancy and midwifery education.

Although the majority of chapters contained in the first section of the book are considered indispensable to safe practice, they are rather brief and poorly described. Given the importance of the topics, the chapters should be more informative and deserve to be expanded with additional detailed information. Two of the chapters I did enjoy in this section were those concerning Ambulatory Analgesia in Labor and Audit in Obstetric Anaesthesia. The former is very welcome and comprehensive, whilst the latter is new and interesting, especially for those not familiar with this topic.

The second section of the book is treated more extensively, is well written and appropriately detailed. Likewise the third section: the chapter on amniotic fluid embolism is excellent, interesting and very informative and contains enough information to merit a place in a standard textbook of practice rather than a general textbook.

It may be noted that this book reflects mostly UK practice, which may be considered a limitation of this book when read by non-UK practitioners. The overall impression, however, is that of a clear, helpful book.

G. Capogna
Rome, Italy