BOOK REVIEWS


This very readable small book gives in detail the author’s method of producing regional anesthesia with pontocaine for abdominal operations. This consists of block of the intercostal nerves at a distance of 4 fingerbreadths from the spine, splanchic block by the posterior route, and infiltration of the skin in the line of incision. For certain operations various modifications and additions are described, such as block of the ilio-inguinal and ilio-hypogastric nerves, paravertebral block of the lumbar nerves, and the supplementary use of nitrous oxide and of pentothal or of epiopal. Thus the greater part of the book appears to duplicate the adequate descriptions of these methods which are given in other, more inclusive texts.

The sections that deserve particular attention are those dealing with the slow preanesthetic intravenous administration of morphine or of pantopon to the point of somnolence, the management of the patient from the psychologic point of view, the need for full understanding between the surgeon and the anesthetist, and the positioning of the patient on the operating table. The text is liberally illustrated with full-page photographs and drawings.

The author states that he has given pontocaine an extensive clinical trial with these methods of regional anesthesia, although he does not suggest the number of cases in which he has used it. From this experience, he draws the following conclusions: Anesthesia develops from pontocaine just as quickly as from procaine. He has never noticed any toxic effects from pontocaine. The operating conditions are “in every way comparable with the conditions prevailing in . . . high spinal anesthesia.” “One can guarantee at least three hours of intense analgesia . . . and muscular relaxation.” At the end of operation, “the edges of the peritoneum can always be brought together without any difficulty.” The extravagance of these claims leaves this reviewer somewhat dubious as to their truth. But if they are true, the method deserves more attention than it is receiving in this country and the publication of the book is more than justified.

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Hewer’s most recent edition of his book, a standard text in most anesthetic libraries, includes brief and concise accounts of new additions to the anesthesiologist’s technical armamentarium. The merits of these technical advances are considered not so much from a physiological and pharmacological basis as they are from personal observations on their practical use. The book has twenty-five chapters dealing with all anesthetic agents and technics, ma-