

Anesthesiology
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Static Charges Not the Culprit

To the Editor:—In reference to the paper by Perel *et al.*,¹ I do not believe a static spark could have been responsible for the burning of the nasal catheter or the patient. I have produced static sparks on woolen blankets in oxygen chambers many times and have never been able to induce a fire. Static electrical charges of the type generated by a patient lying in bed are an inadequate source of energy to ignite an oxygen mixture.

I believe that a much more likely explanation would be that a match was inadvertently lit without the knowledge of the physicians or nurses in attendance. Usually the patient or visitors light a cigarette, unaware of the hazard of an open flame when oxygen is flowing. It is important to clarify

the probable cause of the burn because of the medicolegal implications, as well as the safety of patients.

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REFERENCE

1. Perel A, Mahler Y, Davidson JT: Combustion of a nasal catheter carrying oxygen. *ANESTHESIOLOGY* 45:666-667, 1976

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Book Reviews

B. Raymond Fink, M.D., Editor

The Year Book of Anesthesia, 1975. EDITED BY J. E. ECKENHOFF.
Chicago, Year Book Medical Publishers, 1976. Pages: 365.
Price: \$19.50.

This book consists entirely of abstracts of articles on, or related to, anesthesiology, selected from more than 60 medical journals published during 1975. The abstracts are brief and clear, and most of them are followed by a short editorial comment that may serve to point out the subject. Several tables, 60 figures, and author and subject indices contribute to the usefulness of this carefully proofread and well-produced book.

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Principles of Anesthesiology. Second edition. BY VINCENT J. COLLINS. Philadelphia, Lea and Febiger, 1976. Pages: 1671.
Price: \$60.00.

The second edition of Collins' book has grown 42 per cent in length and 71 per cent in price in the decade since the first edition was published. Like its predecessor, it is arranged in four sections: Fundamental Practices, Regional Anesthesia, Physiological Considerations, and Pharmacological Considerations. Its stated aims are to be "not . . . exhaustive but . . . a concise, comprehensive and documented text." The preface also gives us a preview of its future companion-piece, a many-authored book to be titled "Practices in Anesthesiology," which will cover four other sections: Special Problems in Management, Complications, Blood and Intravenous Therapy, and Respiratory Therapy.

The approach is indeed more encyclopedic than analytic, and the text is naturally fuller in some areas than in others. It is apparent, for instance, that Collins shares with many of us a delight in some of the mechanical aspects of anesthetic equipment. While I confess to being titillated on learning the meaning of still one more of the markings stamped on the shoulder

of an oxygen cylinder, however, I must say that even I found the illustrations on how to sharpen needles somewhat anachronistic, and the engineering drawings of endotracheal tube connectors irrelevant.

Manifestly not concise, in my opinion the grasp of the book would come closer still to its reach if, by virtue of some judicious pruning, more room had been made for a fuller exploration of the recent literature, or better still, for some interpretive or analytic writing. It was disappointing, for instance, not to find any mention of membrane effects of anesthetic drugs in the chapter on theories of narcosis, and to find three chapters on muscle relaxants without any mention of the work of Walts or the Wauds. I found the chapter on monitoring the anesthetized patient both dated and uncritical, and the section on the diagnosis of death remarkably convoluted. I greatly enjoyed the chapter on history, and the section on regional anesthesia was cogent and well illustrated.

There is an uncommonly large number of proofreader's and editor's lapses. The table of contents lists "Reversal of Relaxation Antagonists to Relaxant Drugs" and "Physiology of Respiration Neural Regulation" without benefit of punctuation; a line or two of type has been omitted from a passage in the preface; and the last five pages of the chapter on cyclopropane anesthesia are entitled "Ethylene Anesthesia." More disturbing is the style of the bibliography at the end of each chapter, which makes it very difficult to follow the references in the text into the literature. Reference 9 on page 1322 is not given in that chapter's bibliography at all.

In contrast, Collins' literary style is refreshingly uncomplicated. His diction and syntax are direct and easy to read, and the grammatical lapses are infrequent. "Moving such patients should be careful and gentle" is a direct transcription from the first edition.

In all, the book is a remarkable accomplishment. It was a prodigious undertaking and, in recent years, a unique one. No comprehensive text on anesthesia has been written alone in modern times (*i.e.*, since Lundy's in the summer of '42). While I am sure that most large libraries will wish to have a copy, I do

not feel that it should be the first textbook for a small or personal library. In order to be most useful in the specialty—to those preparing for written or oral examinations, for instance—a textbook of Anesthesiology should be comprehensive, current, and critical. The question is not so much how close Collins has come to these goals, but whether, in 1976, it is possible for any single author to attain them.

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The Consumer's Guide to Successful Surgery. BY L. M. ELTING AND SEYMOUR ISENBERG. New York, St. Martin's Press, 1976. Pages: 341. Price: \$10.00.

In preparing this book, the authors had an opportunity to meet an important social need. Although it is extremely difficult to read the work without bias (and at times even strong emotions), I believe that they have fulfilled this goal only partially. The authors have much to say but their prejudices and frequent misinformation often get in the way.

There is much in this book that will be of importance to the layman. Such topics as "unnecessary surgery . . . choosing a surgeon . . . evaluating a hospital . . . knowing your anesthesiologist" have the potential for being of considerable utility. However, I would have preferred the authors to have taken a less supercilious and superficial approach. At times, I had the distinct impression that they were far more interested in displaying the *mot juste* than in helping a patient with material questions. Their attitude towards the teaching institution ("you are probably going to be a lot of people's meat") is most unkind. Their

contrast between the community hospital and the teaching hospital is stereotyped and simplistic.

I am pleased that the authors make clear to the patient that the anesthesiologist is as much their physician as the surgeon. This chapter, unhappily, is marred by considerable misinformation, which includes but is not restricted to the following: "Anaesthetics are broken down into three groups: general, spinal, and local . . . ether is still the most widely used anaesthetic . . . oxygen dispels the aftereffects of general anaesthesia . . . each tank [of oxygen] contains a small amount of carbon dioxide . . . curare is no longer used in anaesthesia [and] was replaced by a derivative that is much safer, a drug called succinylcholine . . . [in order to prevent explosions] all personnel wear non-conductive shoes." There is a most interesting attempt in this chapter to persuade the reader that the average anesthesiologist cannot tell the difference between prolonged apnea due to succinylcholine and brain death.

The second half, describing specific surgical procedures, strikes me as the better. The information appears accurate and is aimed at helping the patient. Had the tenor of the entire book been equal to that of some of these chapters, its overall quality would have been improved greatly.

It is unfortunate that there is a need for such a book. These matters would ideally be handled on an individual basis with the patient's own physician. Nonetheless, it is certain that this is frequently not what is done, and, in view of this, it is equally unfortunate that this book is of such uneven quality and thereby falls short of its goal.

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Books Received

Title & Edition	Author/Editor	Publisher		
		Address, Name, Year	Pages	Price
Review of Medical Pharmacology Fifth edition	F. H. Meyers E. Jawetz A. Goldfien	Los Altos Lange Medical Publications 1976	740	\$12.50
<i>The fifth edition again fosters a skeptical attitude toward new drug claims and enables the practicing physician to re-examine his prescribing habits critically.</i>				
1976 Year Book of Anesthesia	J. E. Eckenhoff D. L. Bruce E. A. Brunner H. S. Holley H. W. Linde (Editors)	Chicago Year Book Medical Publishers 1976	365	\$19.50
<i>Well known and authoritative annual digest.</i>				
Pain: A Personal Experience	J. Blair Pace	Chicago Nelson-Hall 1976	163	\$ 7.95
<i>Addressed to non-physician professional people.</i>				
Blood Gases in Clinical Practice	L. Lapuerta	Springfield, Ill. Charles C Thomas 1976	117	\$12.50
<i>Addressed primarily to respiratory care technicians and resident physicians.</i>				