

## BOOK REVIEWS

Edward Lowenstein, M.D., Editor

**Practical Regional Anaesthesia.** EDITED BY J. J. HENDERSON and W. S. NIMMO. Oxford, England, Blackwell Scientific Publications, 1983. Pages: 345.

Practical Regional Anaesthesia is a 345-page book published in 1983. Most of the authors are from Scottish medical centers. The editors state in the preface "little guidance on the scope of regional anaesthesia, selection of patients, or management of major or minor complications" can be found in available texts and that "this volume is an attempt to fill the gap, and may be used as a companion to descriptive texts." The book succeeds in this regard. It is easy to read and is useful as a guide for the indications for regional anaesthesia. However, its lack of illustrations makes it useless for the performance of blocks. It does provide a reasonable introduction for the beginner to the pharmacology, applications, and practical considerations of regional anaesthesia.

The book is divided into three main sections and an appendix. Section I focuses on the chemical and pharmacologic properties of the drugs used in regional anaesthesia. The writing is obscure at times, and some important points are missing, e.g., there is no mention of the sodium bisulfite-2-chloroprocaine issue, of the role of the breakdown of ester local anesthetics in allergic reactions, and that methylene blue, for the treatment of prilocaine-induced methemoglobinemia, can act as a Hb oxidant when used in large doses and exacerbate the problem (Bromage, *Epidural Anaesthesia*, p. 300).

Section II deals with general considerations such as premedication, complications, and interaction with concurrent diseases and medications. The chapter on complications is extensive and lists several hundred references. However, it is not as well organized as other chapters and contains ambiguous statements, e.g., "large doses of benzodiazepines reduce the mortality rate as well as preventing convulsions. . . . In clinical practice, premedication with benzodiazepines does not guarantee prevention of seizures" (p. 91). The sections Systemic Complications of Adrenaline, Miscellaneous Traumatic Complications, Complications of Epidural Anaesthesia, and Complications of Individual Techniques are quite good. However, the statement "Phenol seems to be the safest of the sterilizing agents" (p. 113), backed by two short references from 1950 and 1956, is outrageous for this neurolytic agent.

Section III is the best part of the book. It is divided into eight chapters on major categories of surgery for which regional anaesthesia can be used and a chapter on sympathetic blockade. The chapter on head and neck surgery has several good photographs of lesions operated on under regional blocks.

The overall tenor is toward helping the reader formulate a smooth, safe, well-rounded anaesthetic plan. Safety factors that are well known to the experienced anaesthesiologist, but that need to be stressed to the novice, are emphasized. For example, the authors discuss the importance of a thorough preoperative assessment of the patient, the development of a good physician-patient rapport, the education of the patient, the availability of resuscitative equipment, and the hazards of relying on heavy sedation to compensate for inadequate analgesia. Complications of specific blocks are discussed, such as the dangers of a supraclavicular block in a patient with severe respiratory disease, of a masked epidural hematoma during continuous epidural infusion for postop analgesia (this is becoming more pertinent as this technique gains popularity), and of masked neurovascular compromise (e.g., from an injury, surgical mishap, or overly tight cast) with a prolonged brachial plexus block.

The main weakness of this book is the paucity of illustrations on anatomy and techniques and the poor quality of the few that are presented—the illustration for the supraclavicular block (p. 200) is

almost ludicrous. This shortcoming severely limits the usefulness of the book. Its two strengths are the extensive bibliographies and the attention that is given to overall patient care.

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**The Pediatric Drug Handbook.** BY WILLIAM E. BENITZ, and DAVID S. TATRO. Chicago, Yearbook Medical Publishers, 1981. Pages: 475. Price: \$16.95.

Physicians caring for infants and children are often in a quandary when seeking information regarding their drug therapy. This is particularly true for the anaesthesiologist who cares for children on an infrequent basis only. Pharmacology texts and the *Physicians' Desk Reference* often ignore the differences in responses to drugs of infants and children or blandly state that safety and efficacy have not been established in children and that caution must be exercised. This handbook by Benitz and Tatro is recommended as a valuable reference source for many specialists in pediatrics, anaesthesiology, and surgery. The style is concise and clear, and the recommendations are uniformly sound. The information is presented in an organized fashion with helpful tables and graphs, and the prescribing information is supported by a very detailed set of references. The inclusion of references and tables and the organization of the information make this volume preferable to Shirkey's *Pediatric Drug Handbook*. As a handbook that fits in a coat pocket, it should not be compared with Yaffe's more lengthy *Pediatric Pharmacology*, which remains unsurpassed as an exposition of general pharmacologic principles in pediatrics. Particularly strong sections include those on cardiovascular pharmacology, bronchodilators, parenteral nutrition, and antimicrobial therapy.

This edition was completed in 1981. The authors currently are preparing a second edition, which will include more detail on three topics of interest to the anaesthetist: intravenous and intramuscular agents for sedation and anaesthesia, inhalation anaesthetics, and the use of dantrolene sodium in the treatment of malignant hyperpyrexia.

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**Endocrinology and the Anaesthetist, Volume 11, Monographs in Anaesthesiology.** EDITED BY T. OYAMA. New York, Elsevier Science Publishers, 1983. Pages: 272. Price: \$73.00.

This monograph aims to review the effect of anaesthesia and surgery on endocrine function, and "the effects of metabolic disorders on anaesthetic management, surgical techniques, and the postoperative care of the patient." While it succeeds reasonably well in fulfilling the first goal, it fails almost uniformly in its second goal.

Oyama begins by reviewing his classic studies of the effect of anaesthetic agents and surgery on endocrine function. No attempt is made to indicate the significance on clinical care of these effects. Kehlet, in the next chapter, similarly reviews the effect of regional anaesthesia on endocrine function and the effect of surgery on endocrine function. He and coauthor Moller indicate their impressions