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Low Flow Anaesthesia: The Theory and Practice of Low Flow, Minimal Flow and Closed System Anaesthesia, Second Edition. By Jay A. Baum, with the English text revised by Geoffrey Nunn. Butterworth-Heinemann, Boston, 2001. Pages: 303. Price \$80.00.

The first edition of *Low Flow Anaesthesia* was printed three times in German and twice in English. It was translated into Italian, Chinese, and Korean. The popularity of that edition reflects the importance of the subject. The second edition aims to meet a continued and apparently increasing interest in low flow anesthesia, an interest also indicated by the existence of a society dedicated to its advancement (the Association for Low Flow Anaesthesia). Baum nicely outlines the case for lower flows (Chapter 6, Advantages of the Rebreathing Technique in Anaesthesia.) Low flow-closed circuit anesthesia should appeal to the politically correct (it spares the environment from the burden of unnatural gases that may injure the atmosphere), the frugal (it saves money), and the adventurous (many souls I've met are uncomfortable even thinking of how to apply a closed system). Numerous figures and tables compliment the text. However, although the text covers all issues germane to low flow-closed circuit anesthesia, doing so in great detail, it will not bring tranquility to those first considering low flow-closed circuit anesthesia.

The limitations of the book are technical and philosophical. The book has a European focus, in part the product of its origin as a German text, and in part because the interest in low flow-closed circuit is greater across the Atlantic. The result is that the syntax can be obscure: "From the pharmacokinetics point of view, closed and low flow systems are nothing but a special parameter selection with respect to the rebreathing fraction in establishing the desired alveolar concentration of the inhalational anesthetic." (p 45). The sentence is better in context, but not much. The European focus also means that the book emphasizes European equipment, not, however, to the exclusion of equipment used in North America. The liberal use of figures is not always complimented by sufficiently detailed legends or explanations in the text. Too often, the reader is left guessing.

What I find most limiting is, perhaps, merely philosophical. The book makes a simple subject appear complicated. This was appropriate before the widespread use of anesthetic and respiratory analyzers. But why is it necessary now? Today, anyone can easily control anesthetic and respiratory gas concentrations by referring to monitors that provide accurate values on a breath-by-breath basis at any inflow rate. There are a few tricks one needs to know, but these can be expressed in three (well, maybe six) pages rather than three hundred. The consequence of the appearance of great complexity is that it may dissuade the timid anesthetist from adopting a useful technique.

Nonetheless, for the anesthetist deeply interested in low flow-closed circuit anesthesia, this single-authored book offers a wealth of information. It provides a reference that supplies all of the details needed for delivery of anesthesia by low flow techniques.

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Bonica's Management of Pain. By John D. Loeser, M.D. Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, Philadelphia, 2001. Pages: 2,178. Price: \$299.00 new or \$162.50 used from an on-line bookstore.

Many years ago, when I was a fellow in the Department of Anesthesiology and Critical Care Medicine, I searched the library to find the best resource to learn about the field of pain management. At that time, I found two books: Prithvi Raj's, "*Practical Management of Pain*"¹ and, of course, John Bonica's, "*The Management of Pain*."² Bonica's two-volume edition provided a wealth of information that was not easily found from other sources. The basic pathophysiology, the differential diagnosis, technological techniques, and a few of the neurosurgical techniques were nicely covered in this edition. I can't say that I ever got to the point of reading this two-volume edition cover-to-cover. Whenever an issue arose that required an in-depth review, however, I turned to Bonica's *The Management of Pain*. Unfortunately, this meant that I lugged two volumes of this text back and forth on a daily basis, giving myself acute back pain in the process. This book, which was the second edition, had been updated in 1990 from the first edition, which was published in 1953. It truly was amazing how thorough this book was for the clinician.

Ten yr have gone by, however, since the second edition was published, and this decade has seen a veritable explosion of information on the basic science of pain, techniques associated with appropriate pain therapy, and methods to control acute and chronic pain. Hence, I purchased John Loeser's 2001 edition of *Bonica's Management of Pain* with great enthusiasm. This latest edition has the benefit of being the first published in a single volume. It maintains the strong, critical foundation contained in the earlier editions and is updated with current information and references to the literature. If I had to point to one area that could have been developed more in this text, it would be the role of interventional therapies for chronic nonmalignant pain. Spinal cord stimulation, intrathecal infusion therapy, and spinal injection techniques have become the mainstay of interventional pain management. These techniques, while covered, are not addressed in the same depth that is applied to considerations of medically- or psychologically-oriented approaches for pain.

John Loeser needs to be commended, however. He has accomplished the almost impossible task of updating John Bonica's thorough and expansive text on the management of pain while simultaneously producing a single-volume edition. Nothing was lost in this new edition and much has been gained.

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References

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2. The Management of Pain, 2nd edition: Edited by Bonica JJ. Philadelphia, Lea & Febiger, 1990

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