recommendation for midazolam and morphine, avoiding propofol on grounds of expense, is unlikely to strike a chord within UK neuropractice. Other insular aspects include just half a page of reference to the ‘Lund approach’ of ICP rather than CPP (cerebral perfusion pressure)-directed therapy. The chapter on ICP measurement surprisingly omitted interpretation of waveforms, and the section on electrical monitoring failed to explain burst suppression or the principles of the processed EEG, and was accompanied by poor quality graphics. A chapter on spinal issues showed similar poor reproduction of radiological material, and more critically did not propose a consensus position on the use of collars or timing of surgical intervention for the usual fractures.

Although the role of hypothermia is addressed, neuroanaesthetists would be disappointed to find no debate on cerebral protection strategies before the use of temporary vascular clips, or the optimal timing of orthopaedic intervention after brain injury. Intensivists generally would find the recommendation to achieve percutaneous endoscopic jejunoctomy feeding within 24 h of injury somewhat strange in the absence of discussion on prokinetic strategies, and one could have expected a respiratory chapter to debate aspiration injury, pneumonia and neurogenic oedema, which are the common problems within a neuro-ICU setting. A chapter on ethical issues is welcome, but there are inconsistencies in defining the status of brain death and it is noteworthy that although there is a section on euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide, there is no discussion on non-heart-beating organ donation, one of the most complex ethical challenges to currently face neurointensivists. Another omission, despite an era of the multidisciplinary team concept, is reference to the integrative role of the physiotherapist from the point of admission onwards, covering aspects such as advanced respiratory management and the early introduction of rehabilitative techniques.

In conclusion, this worthy project offers a US perspective on a broad range of neurosurgical and neurological issues, but is neither comprehensive nor focused on the key components that anaesthetists at different levels of training and in different settings require from a definitive text on this subspecialty. A textbook that offers basic anatomy and physiology should allow any practitioner to follow the patient pathway for any particular pathology, easily identify best practice at any stage, include unequivocal management advice for common problems, and allow access to a balanced debate on unresolved issues. The authors very humbly acknowledge potential shortfalls in an exercise of this magnitude, and constructive criticism may help shape the promised second edition.

So is the book completely without flaws or problems? One issue from an international point of view is, of course, the lack of contribution from continental Europe. This obviously, to some extent, limits the book’s use for the non-British reader, but on the whole the textbook still represents an excellent didactic tool for almost any anaesthetist involved with teaching and education. The inclusion of two chapters devoted to paediatric cardiac anaesthesia does, however, appear to be slightly out of focus with the rest of the text and they could have been omitted. With regards to clinical practice, the recommendation regarding the use of gelatins for volume replacement and 10% glucose solutions as intraoperative maintenance in neonates could be discussed at some length, as could the repeated recommendation of codeine for postoperative analgesia in children.

All in all this textbook is certainly recommended for anyone who is not an expert paediatric anaesthetist, not only to buy but in fact to read from start to finish!

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DOI: 10.1093/bja/aej590


This substantial volume contains 36 ‘essays’ addressing important bioethical issues in human experimentation. The entire series of 15 volumes purports to form an accessible library of basic material likely to elude most scholars. The other ethical dilemmas presented in other volumes include such contemporary areas as The Genome Project and Gene Therapy, edited by Scotland’s inimitable medical ethicist, Sheila McLean; Abortion, edited by Belinda Bennett; and Medicine and Industry, edited by George Tomossy.

This is not an easy read, owing to a combination of varying content style and written style, not to mention the sheer size of the book. Some of the articles appear to have been reproduced entirely from another source and appear in a miniscule font size in columns, whilst others are in a more easily focused-upon size, but a completely different font style. The overall impression is disjointed and unnecessarily, rather unprofessional. I suspect the idea was to highlight the ‘essay’ nature of the chapters (i.e. individual opinion and also the historical value in some cases) but I prefer a consistent style that I can read without artificial aids. The style of the actual written content is also variable, with little evidence of editorial input. Despite my reservations on the presentation of the material in the book, the content is fascinating. This is not my area of expertise, nor even interest, yet I enjoyed paddling in philosophical waters. It is a