
A consultant of 12 years standing who had never read the book before, and a specialist registrar who had used previous editions during her final FRCA examination, have reviewed this book.

Registrar prospective
On seeing this edition for the first time, my thoughts were ‘what have they taken out of it?’ It looked so thin and small that I dived in to see what had been drastically cut out of the book that had accompanied me through my final FRCA examination like a close friend. My fears were laid to rest, nothing appeared to be missing, and in fact there was even new entries. The illustrations had all been re-drawn, they were much clearer, and there was a dash of colour. What the publishers appear to have done is what every woman knows; if you dress in dark colours and use good quality materials, you can look attractive and slim.

The third edition follows successful previous editions of this book, with the addition of topical new entries such as herbal medicines and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). The clarity of the content starts with the explanatory notes. The list of recommended international non-proprietary names (rINNs) is thorough, with the fact explained that the terms adrenaline and noradrenaline (instead of epinephrine and norepinephrine) are used in the text because of their natural hormone status. The concise approach continues throughout the text with cross-referencing links highlighted and additional reference reading recommended at the end of relevant entries. Established practitioners would also benefit in having this book to hand not only to look up material for themselves, but also as a guide for talking around subjects with trainees.

Consultant’s view
On reading it, I was reminded of reading the Synopsis of Anaesthesia for the FFARCS, the only real difference being the dictionary style layout rather than an anatomical systems approach.

There is a huge amount of information, ranging from the common to the obscure, in this book. If you are interested in knowing, for instance, what the Poserio effect is (p. 422), how to perform a Retzius Cave block (p. 455), what is the Clathrate Iceberg theory (p. 121), how to do minimally invasive direct cardiac massage ‘MID-CM’ (p. 342), the implications of Marey’s law (p. 331), and the magnetism of Mesmerism (p. 337), you have it all here. This is one of its great attributes; readers will look up one topic and end up reading above and below that entry, about subjects that had not even crossed their minds. Everyone appears to like the little historical anecdotes, which are described as light relief. However, they do bring to life the evolution of anaesthesia.

Conversations with the anaesthetic specialist registrars in our department have given very favourable reviews of previous editions of this book, in particular as an aid to reading for the final FRCA. Most, on seeing the new edition, were impressed with the updating. Moreover, this book is also attractive for other personnel, including recovery nurses, anaesthetic secretaries, and other paramedical staff.

In summary
There was not much room for improvement from the previous editions of this book, but this has been achieved. Not only aesthetically (the slicker packaging making it look smaller and more attractive), but also with the content update and clearer illustrations. We would recommend this book to all anaesthetists in training.

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