‘Behaviour of fluids, liquids and gases, pressure and flow’; the remainder being in Chapter 12 ‘Gas pressure, volume and flow measurement’.

There is a lot of information in this book but not all of it is easy to extract. It is aimed at the FRCA candidate, however, it assumes prior knowledge of the subject. It does not, in my opinion, appear to address their frequent plea: ‘but we didn’t do physics at school’.

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This book is a comprehensive review of seizures that may present to critical units and is part of an American series—Current Clinical Neurology’. Presentation and pathophysiology of critical care seizures is covered in the first chapter, followed by 12 chapters covering all the main causes of seizures seen in critical care, including iatrogenic and illicit drug-induced seizures. The final chapter covers the management of status epilepticus and seizures. The book is a multi-author text, although four of the chapters are co-authored by Dr Varelas. Style is fairly consistent throughout: a journal style summary followed by a general introduction, and then a subdivided main text, covering epidemiology, pathophysiology and treatment. Each chapter is fully referenced with 40–180 references. Images of CT and MRI along with unprocessed EEGs are scattered throughout. The book is surprisingly readable, though the extensive and somewhat inconsistent use of abbreviations does detract from this.

The editor’s hope, outlined in the preface, is that the book ‘can serve as a useful aid in everyday ICU and in neurological practice for intensivists, neurologists, neurosurgeons and any other healthcare professional or student in this expanding field’. How well does the book achieve this?

There is no doubt about the comprehensive nature of each chapter. The chapters covering alcohol and electrolyte imbalance, in particular, provide good reviews not only of seizures, but cover the topic in sufficient depth for a general textbook of critical care. This comprehensive nature, perhaps inevitably, detracts from the everyday usefulness of the book. There is a wealth of information here, but much of it is hidden in hundreds of words of densely written prose, particularly regarding epidemiology. As a reference work on the epidemiology of critical care seizures the book works well, but is it really useful for a practicing clinician to know the P-value (0.001) for the difference in frequency of seizures after lobar intracerebral haemorrhage vs cortical infarction? Everyday handbooks work best when evidence is complemented by flow-charts and treatment algorithms. Sadly, these are somewhat lacking. Having read through the book, I was looking forward to a useful summary chapter on practical treatment and diagnosis of seizures. The chapter is probably the most useful but seems to just miss the mark. The information is all there and tables are given describing differential diagnosis, treatment of seizures and status epilepticus. However, even these tables seem confusing when read in conjunction with the text. The table for management of a single brief seizure suggests consideration of chronic anti-epileptic therapy, yet in the text on the same page, the authors state that one brief seizure is not an indication for such drugs. The chapter most obviously missing is neurological monitoring. There are numerous reproductions of raw EEGs in the book, many without scales and with a variable quality of annotation.

The final chapter gives a good textual description of typical EEG findings, but no accompanying figure. Processed EEG monitoring with CFAM is not mentioned in the index, and I could only find one reference to its use in the text. Given the difficulty in clinically diagnosing seizure activity in a sedated patient, and the high incidence of non-convulsive status epilepticus this seems a strange omission.

There are some rather odd statements within the book, which makes me wonder whether the book is really for neurologists rather than intensivists. Surely intensivists do not need to be told that intubated patients need pulse oximetry, or that haemodynamic support consists of fluids, pressors and inotropes?

On the positive side, many of the tables provide useful summaries of aspects of epilepsy management, particularly pharmacy, and trainees and consultants alike could probably learn a lot by just reading the tables and the final chapter and skipping the rest.

I am not sure quite who will find this book useful. Neurologists will probably find the information elsewhere in textbooks and reviews and intensivists will not find it practical enough. I suspect that the foreword may have unwittingly summed the book up: ‘[this book] is practically a text on epilepsy, even in a way a text of medicine . . . it fills a need we may not have even realized exists’.

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The release of this title is timely, as bariatric surgery and the problems arising from obesity are an issue worldwide. Such a title, an editor tells us, is also long overdue in countries where the problem of obesity is more established, such as the USA. It is from the USA that the book draws the majority of its authors, with a significant number from Argentina and a few from Europe.

The reader is encouraged to use this text as a guide and reference. Its 417 pages are set out in logical order with nine sections covering general considerations, pathophysiology, preoperative evaluation, intraoperative management of comorbidities, pharmacology, monitoring, then intraoperative and postoperative management followed by conclusions. Each section is multi-authored and subdivided into short easily digestible chapters, of which there are 30 in total. All chapters are logically presented, up-to-date and comprehensively referenced.

Burdened with the responsibility for providing anaesthesia for the developing bariatric surgery service in our region, I was eager to review this book and have read it from cover to cover. I was hoping to benefit from the knowledge of others more experienced in the field than myself, and maybe clarify remaining areas of uncertainty in the practice that I have developed. It is from this position, one of reasonable knowledge and experience in providing anaesthesia for obese patients, but faced with the prospect of increasing number and size of patients, that I suspect most potential buyers will be considering this text.

Overall I was disappointed with this book. As already stated, all chapters are logically presented, up-to-date and well referenced. Several chapters are very good indeed, particularly the section covering pathophysiology of obesity where the chapters dealing with respiratory and cardiovascular issues contained valuable and concise information. The chapter discussing preoperative evaluation is also well written and contains specific and
constructive practical advice. Other chapters, for example those in the section discussing perioperative management of comorbidities such as diabetes mellitus, cardiac disease, renal dysfunction are interesting, informative and well written but lacked significant new information relating specifically to the obese population to make much of an impression.

The editing might have been better; almost every chapter contained an unnecessary repetition of the BMI definitions of obesity and morbid obesity, often with similar comments about the increasing prevalence of the problem. Overlaps in the information presented in some chapters occurred occasionally when similar topics such as cardiovascular physiology were discussed. Other chapters contained information that extended well beyond what I would have judged an appropriate brief, such as the extensive discussion around the diagnosis and treatment of aspiration pneumonia including the role of bronchoscopy and ventilatory strategies, in a chapter entitled ‘digestive physiology and gastric aspiration’. The chapter on ‘management of the obese critically ill patient in intensive care unit’ strangely contained a section describing the operative procedures and indications for bariatric surgery, together with short sections covering pregnancy and deep venous thrombosis prophylaxis, each of which has a dedicated chapter. Language, grammar and unexplained abbreviations were very occasionally a problem.

It is quite telling and most disappointing that reading this text has not advanced my current practice. With minor reservations, I would recommend this book for those new to bariatric surgery or with little experience dealing with the morbidly obese but those with more experience looking for firm conclusions from which they might refine their practice will be disappointed.

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