Despite the title, this is largely a text aimed at invasive pain management techniques rather than regional anaesthesia for operative surgery. The imaging modalities discussed concentrate on the fluoroscopic and CT imaging needed to perform these invasive techniques safely and accurately rather than, for example, the ultrasonic location techniques, which are becoming more prevalent in regional anaesthesia. The book is designed as a practical guide for those who perform or intend to perform a wide range of invasive procedures for both cancer-related pain and a variety of non-malignant pain syndromes.

The text is divided into four main sections beginning with basic technique for image guidance needle placement. This includes essential chapters on radiation safety, the use of radiographic contrast agents and a brief chapter on the pharmacology of the agents used, including steroids and neurolytic solutions, as well as local anaesthetics. The next three sections cover in turn, spinal injection techniques, sympathetic and peripheral nerve blocks, and finally a section devoted to implantable devices for drug delivery systems and spinal cord stimulation systems. Individual chapters within each section cover specific techniques in detail and follow a standard outline, beginning with some initial background information followed by a description of the relevant anatomy, patient selection and the indications for each technique. Block technique is then described in step-by-step detail beginning with essentials of patient positioning, needle placement and finally potential complications. The emphasis is very much on the imaging and the combination of anatomical diagrams with radiological images are particularly useful. There are also very useful diagrams of patient position with respect to the C-arm to facilitate optimal radiological visualization.

Most of the commonly applied block techniques are covered within the text without attempting to comprehensively cover all of the more esoteric blocks. For example, the spinal section covers facet injection and radiofrequency treatment, sacroiliac joint injection and lumbar discography, while the sympathetic block section covers stellate ganglion, coeliac plexus, lumbar plexus and superior hypogastric block. As one would expect, the emphasis is very much on treatment of the more commonly presenting clinical problems; spinal pain, complex regional pain syndromes and peripheral vascular insufficiency not amenable to vascular reconstruction. There is however a very useful and well-illustrated final section dealing with implantable systems. This covers the use of intrathecal drug delivery systems for cancer-related care, as well as an equally well-illustrated final chapter covering the placement of spinal cord stimulation systems.

A potential problem with a text of this type is that there remains debate over the efficacy of a number of these techniques, as the evidence base is often limited. These techniques should not therefore be viewed in isolation but as part of a multimodal approach including pharmacological intervention, physiotherapy and psychologically based pain management programmes. To be fair, the author has left out a number of the less appropriate techniques and has pointed out a number of the other limitations within each chapter. However, a chapter looking at the measurement of pain in general and assessment of success of the intervention in particular would be welcome along with perhaps the place of these techniques within a broader multidisciplinary team approach. This may reflect a difference in practice or emphasis in management between the US and European practice or merely reflect the focus of the book. The preface states that no single comprehensive well-illustrated text exists in this field. This may have been the case when the text was written but other texts are now available in the market. I believe this text has the advantage of superior radiographic images and illustrations within a concise format while concentrating on the more relevant blocks. The author has achieved his aim of producing a practical manual useful to both physicians-in-training as well as the experienced practitioner.