As would be expected from its origins, each chapter reflects the interests and expertise of its expert authors. There is a host of information that will be of interest to those involved in providing pain relief to children in different settings. There is also much that will be of interest to the general reader. There are interesting vignettes included, such as a brief history of sickle cell disease. However, the remit is wide and the book small. Thus, it is not totally comprehensive. For example, the chapter on hospital-based care only mentions procedure-related pain as a major component of the cancer experience. There is a lengthy section on immunizations in the outpatient chapter. The management of procedure-related pain in the hospital setting has to be inferred.

On balance, I believe this book does fill a hole in the market. It provides information that will be helpful to practitioners working in different settings. It should certainly be available in libraries and pain management services. I am not sure that it will be purchased by individuals. The final chapter on knowledge translation and pain management argues strongly that the core issue is no longer a lack of knowledge, but a failure to put what we already know to use. This book provides a very useful source of the knowledge: the challenge to put it in to practice remains.

J. M. Goddard
Sheffield, UK
E-mail: John.goddard@sch.nhs.uk
doi:10.1093/bja/ael266

Principles of Pain Management for Anaesthetists.

In the preface, the two authors state that they produced this book in response to a request by trainee anaesthetists for a text which would give them the core knowledge required for their training. Therefore, the initial impression may be that this book is an ‘introduction’ with the information kept to a relatively ‘basic’ level. However, this is clearly not the case.

The soft-back book is divided into four main sections consisting of, physiology and pharmacology of pain, acute pain management, chronic pain management and a relatively small final section on pain in malignant disease. My expectation was that the text would be written in a manner which would include both introductory elements for those starting and move to discuss the core knowledge for those with more experience. However, I found that the 260 pages contain a significant number of bullet-point lists, both within the text and in tables printed in a relatively small typeface, in a style which was relatively didactic and with the information condensed to keep the book compact. Therefore, as a tool to learn facts or revise them for an examination, or as a check to remind oneself of details learnt previously, the book clearly has a purpose and will find a justifiable place on many departmental bookshelves.

However, the concise style of the book combined with a relative lack of discussion, did not seem to lend itself to a trainee gaining insight into how to manage patients, or into the decision-making processes. There are no external references at all to research publications and only very limited cross references or details for further reading at the end of some chapters. Therefore, the lack of discussion and information on alternative perspectives will not in my view encourage the trainee to learn how to make decisions when a first choice fails to be effective.

Despite the limited number of authors, I found some inconsistencies in detail and some lack of detail disconcerting. Whilst the didactic presentation of procedures may reflect local practice, they do not give a clear representation of differences which may be in common practice elsewhere. Therefore, one would want to caution the inexperienced trainee against the perception that the text describes procedures in full detail or as the only way of doing something.

In contrast, the extensive lists within the book are a very effective aid-memoir and the concise style precludes the need for summaries. There are several case scenarios at the end of some chapters. The different styles may reflect different authorship, but some describe a single process for a patient with a particular diagnosis whilst others prompt a more investigative approach. More questions and answers within these scenarios may overcome some of the concerns regarding decision making for the trainee.

Overall this book will provide a good basic knowledge for the final FRCA exam but the reader will have to search for other references and texts to provide the more complete picture if greater involvement in pain management is proposed.

J. E. Peacock
Sheffield, UK
E-mail: john.peacock@sth.nhs.uk
doi:10.1093/bja/ael267