This is the fifth edition of this popular and highly respected reference text. It marks a turning point in the continual evolution of the book in that the original authors have handed over the ‘baton’ to two new editors. Together with a team of 25 leading anaesthetists from the USA and Canada, they have completely revised and updated the book.

The new edition retains its traditional structure of being organized by disease with the first nine chapters (comprising nearly one-third of the book) dealing with cardiopulmonary and vascular disorders. Anaesthetic implications of disease processes and treatments are comprehensively discussed throughout. Each subject is presented in a standard format with an initial brief definition followed by relevant pathophysiological features. Anaesthetic concerns and management are organized in the typical user-friendly pre-, intra-, and postoperative format. The brief discussions of individual disease processes are highly pertinent and the anaesthetic management details provide practical solutions and highlight specific concerns well. An appropriate balance is achieved with common diseases being discussed at length whereas rare conditions are covered in less detail.

The last two chapters in the book break from the systematic format and cover paediatric diseases and geriatric disorders. The challenge of covering all relevant paediatric illness in a chapter that is 58 pages long is unrealistic, and the authors make no claim that it does so. For this purpose, there are books available that are exclusively devoted to the anaesthetic implications of paediatric disease. Neonatal physiology and pharmacology is briefly discussed as are the more common medical and surgical diseases encountered in the neonatal period. Nonetheless, I found this chapter concise yet comprehensive.

Another new feature of the latest edition is the Expert Consult. Once activated, this allows the reader to gain access to the entire contents of the book online. The ability to retrieve this information anywhere at anytime could prove very useful, particularly when on-call and the patient with a rare comorbidity presents for surgery.

Despite the multiple authors, the writing style is homogeneous throughout and a joy to read. The book is also refreshingly devoid of American medical abbreviations. There are a few omissions of note. For instance, I was surprised to find that cardiopulmonary exercise testing is not discussed anywhere in the book. There are numerous useful illustrations, but no full colour pictures, something that would really enhance presentation. Nevertheless, this is an excellent reference book and it should have a place in every anaesthetic department library.

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doi:10.1093/bja/aen311

This fourth edition of one of the standard pain medicine textbooks has five editors, all from the USA. The book is clearly laid out in nine sections, beginning with a general overview of the different aspects and development of pain medicine. The page edges are marked with colour coding which aids rapid location of particular sections. There then follows a section on the basic science of pain including a very interesting chapter focusing on neural plasticity within the brain. The third section is about pain assessment, an important area that is often not well covered in textbooks. Chapters cover basic assessment and history taking and also other important areas including radiological, physical, and psychological assessment. The fourth section covers the clinical features of a range of acute and chronic pain syndromes, such as low back pain, phantom limb pain, and headache disorders. The subsequent sections move on to consider a wide range of options for pain management. The fifth section includes pharmacological agents, psychological interventions, and physical therapies. The next two sections focus on the use of nerve blocks and interventional techniques, including for cancer pain management. The eighth section discusses special situations, such as in the critically ill and at the end of life. There is also a very helpful chapter about radiation safety. The final section considers outcomes, including a chapter discussing the recent IMMPACT recommendations for clinical trials and in particular syndromes such as back pain and neuropathic pain. At the end is an appendix, which is very much aimed at the American market, including procedure codes and templates that might be useful for billing. The internet
resources listed are somewhat limited and are biased towards a North American readership.

Despite multiple authors, the style is generally fairly consistent throughout, adding to readability. There are clear summary boxes for each chapter, with figures and tables that are easy to read and informative, with good use of colour. Most chapters are well referenced, although as is inevitable in any textbook of this size, some chapters omit relevant recent references. Overall, this is a comprehensive reference textbook that should prove a valuable practical aid to clinicians in the management of patients in pain. The many areas of pain medicine that are covered within this high-quality textbook will make it a valuable and reliable resource to both trainees and consultants. It will also be helpful for those preparing for examinations where pain medicine is covered, as its style lends itself to learning and revision. This fourth edition certainly deserves a place in the library of any anaesthesia department, and will be regularly used as a trusted reference source.

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doi:10.1093/bja/aen312