for key words are easy. All the 2D and 3D echo images unfortunately appear as stills and a big advance in the next edition would be to have them in the dynamic movie format. The ECG atlas at the end of the book is a useful educational tool.

Having now used this 6th edition of Kaplan over the past several months as a reference textbook, it has answered 99% of questions put to it. This is the authoritative textbook on cardiovascular anaesthesia and should be high on the priority list of all practicing anaesthetists with an interest in this field, and also medical libraries. Overall, this is a worthy update of a fine textbook that will be valuable to practitioners and trainees in cardiac anaesthesia.

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A triumvirate can be defined as ‘any association of three in office or authority’: the political alliance of Gaius Julius Caesar, Marcus Licinius Crassus, and Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus being perhaps the most famous. In pain medicine, almost universal acceptance is given to the bio-psycho-social model and few would argue against this three dimensionality. It is the basis of modern pain management and is at the core of education as endorsed by the Faculty of Pain Medicine, the British Pain Society, and the International Association for the Study of Pain. Its usefulness and application to patients with back pain is, of course, no exception. It is unusual and disappointing, therefore, that this book leaves out one of those limbs and this is a major weakness. It contains very little on the ‘bio’. There is no information or discussion of diagnosis, differential diagnosis, exclusion of serious pathology, examination, or investigation. There is almost nothing regarding any anatomical site of origin of pain or pathological process.

The most basic requirement of any piece of research is that like is compared with like. Back pain is a symptom, not a diagnosis. It can be caused by disc degeneration, muscle pain, uterine fibroids, retroperitoneal tumours, a slowly expanding aortic aneurysm, to name but a few. To ignore its differential diagnosis means that any piece of research looking at ‘back pain’ must be interpreted with extreme caution. This is not mentioned in the book.

Muscle activity is discussed in an excellent chapter on deconditioning. But if this can be done why is little said about changes in joints, intervertebral discs, and peripheral nerves? The zygapophyseal joint, sacroiliac joint, and intervertebral disc are all proven sources of back pain and yet only two of these structures are mentioned in a single page and on one illustration. A reference to 1992 that ‘only in a minority of cases (approximately 15%) can the patho-anatomical source of low back pain be identified’ (Chapter 28) ignores the work of many scientists, scores of excellent publications, and reviews emanating not just from research groups, but from bodies such as the International Spine Intervention Society and the World Institute of Pain. It is not just pain physicians but rheumatologists, musculoskeletal physicians, and surgeons who have their practices ignored.

What this book does very well is psychology and social aspects of chronic back pain which reflects the ~50% of the authors who are psychologists or rehabilitation experts. As a standard pain clinic doctor, I have to admit to being overwhelmed by psychological theory and detail. The advances in psychology are superbly described and argued and current and future research is laid out.

Many chapters are very detailed, some are somewhat esoteric, for example, dysfunction of the hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal axis in chronic low back pain (which is fascinating), and some are rather long. Boxed learning bullet points would have been very welcome.

As a review of chronic pain psychological and social research, this book is very strong. It is misleading that this is by no means reflected in its title. For professionals or students within these disciplines, I think that it is highly recommendable. For the multidisciplinary pain physician, it does not provide a balanced picture.

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There have been international symposia on the history of anaesthesia every 4 or 5 yr since 1982. The 7th symposium was held at Heraklion, Crete, Greece, in 2009. This well-produced book publishes the 47 presentations. The essays are by individuals about individual topics and are linked only by their historical theme. The essays are in English, but this is not the first language of many authors and there are a number of misprints, although they do not detract from the value of the book. It is divided into four historical sections with a final section about anaesthetic pioneers. It has an extensive index. There is a good summary of the symposium in the first chapter by the senior editor, Helen Askitopoulou, titled ‘From Greek Antiquity to the Twentieth Century’.