addition to needle cricothyrotomy) and oesophageal obturators (such as the Combitube and laryngeal tube), which may be in place in patients who are transported to the emergency department.

As the forward of this book states, competence can only be achieved through both the acquisition of knowledge and practical skills and can only be maintained through regular practice and experiential learning. I believe that this book is an excellent companion to these endeavours and I highly recommend this book to medical staff from all disciplines who may be involved in emergency airway management.

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Rosenblatt and Popescu have combined their respective expertise in airway management and thoracic anaesthesia to produce a book that aims to be a complete guide to both upper and lower airway management. The book consists of 148 chapters from 83 contributors, based mostly in North America, but also from the UK, Europe and Asia, and includes a downloadable electronic version with access to video content. Discussion of upper airway techniques and cases occupies approximately two-thirds of the chapters, with the remaining third of the book being given over to lower airway techniques. Each chapter spans two to three pages and focuses on a particular technique or clinical scenario, with a series of standardised questions, followed by relevant answers. Unlike other books on airway management, this volume passes only occasional comment on the anatomy, physiology and pharmacology of the topic, choosing instead to focus on the techniques that may be used to manage clinical scenarios and the decision-making process for formulating management plans.

The breadth of upper airway topics covered is impressive. These are grouped into 13 sections, including basic and advanced techniques and airway management in clinical subspecialties including otolaryngology/ENT, maxillofacial surgery, paediatrics, trauma and cervical spine surgery. There is also an extensive section on tracheostomy cases and shorter but very useful sections on nasal intubation, extubation and airway management in settings outside of the operating theatre. As one might expect, the otolaryngology section covers a wide range of cases and techniques and is a particular highlight. Operations in and around the laryngeal structures and discussion of the various approaches, including jet ventilation through supraglottic, subglottic and transcricothyroid catheters makes especially interesting reading.

The amount of detail on different topics is variable, probably as a result of this being a multi-author book. The technique of mask ventilation is dissected in fastidious detail and the chapter on previous radiotherapy is very comprehensive, with a detailed table clearly outlying different sites of malignancy, the resulting pathology from radiotherapy, early and late disability and anaesthetic implications. There is one chapter concerning preparing a patient for awake fibre-optic intubation. Given that awake intubation is identified as ‘a mandatory skill’ by this very chapter, and is referred to many times throughout the book, it is surprising to see one only method for anaesthetising the airway when so many variations exist. Many of the experts in fibre-optic intubation in our own institution would not use the technique described here and a comparison of the various approaches would have been most welcome. Similarly there is a chapter dedicated to total intravenous anaesthesia that does not mention target controlled infusions or multicompartmental models.

The latter third of the book is dedicated to lower airway techniques, and in particular airway management for thoracic surgery. Again, the breadth is impressive, with the content divided into eight sections that include interventional pulmonology, lung isolation devices and techniques and airway surgery. Much of this information is most relevant to those in tertiary or quaternary centres, but anaesthetists anywhere could find themselves dealing with the lower airway emergencies, which are given their own section.

In general, the book is well presented, and the format of clinical scenario followed by questions makes for straightforward reading, helping the reader to develop a problem-solving approach to such cases. The real strength of this book is the associated online video content. Extensive video laryngoscopy and fibre-optic scope use has allowed the authors to capture footage of much of the book’s subject matter from both elective and emergency cases, in and outside of the operating theatre. Accompanying 123 of the 148 chapters is a video lasting a few minutes demonstrating the technique, pathology or device described in the text. These are very helpful—it is a lot easier to understand how a complex multistep method of securing the airway is carried out by watching it rather than reading a long description, and the range of airway pathology and altered anatomy available to view is impressive, and in some instances rather chilling (such as an epiglottic, pedunculated ball valve mass flipping in and out of the larynx with inspiration). There is also footage of many of the operations discussed, with interesting views of airway surgery, such as that using robots, and even an impressive demonstration of surgical injury to the carotid artery.

The library of videos includes footage of high-risk situations, e.g. ventilation through a laryngeal mask airway (LMA) of a patient bleeding into the airway with the LMA being exchanged for a tube over a scope. After viewing the wealth of material for the upper airway, a few more videos for the lower airway would have been welcome also (only approximately half of the chapters
are accompanied by one), although this would have perhaps led to more repetition.

Overall the book is an extensive manual of the different devices and techniques that are available to the anaesthetist, and an exhaustive account of the many problems encountered in managing airways. It is recommended reading for anaesthetists in all areas, although parts will obviously be of more relevance to those with an interest in head and neck and thoracic surgery.

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This pocket-sized handbook is an addition to the existing Oxford Specialist Handbook series in anaesthesia. Regional anaesthetic techniques have had a resurgence in recent years since the introduction of ultrasound. This was a much awaited and needed publication, as Oxford Handbooks are renowned as quick and practical guides to a speciality or subspeciality, and regional anaesthesia is increasingly used as a sole anaesthetic and for providing supplemental analgesia. The editors of this book include a physician’s assistant, an anaesthetic consultant with an interest in pain management and two senior anaesthetic consultants with extensive backgrounds in regional anaesthesia.

The book is about half the size of the Oxford Handbook of Anaesthesia and has 557 pages divided into 50 chapters. The book has six subsections, including general considerations, head and neck, upper limb, trunk blocks, lower limb and neuraxial blocks. The first section begins with a brief history of regional anaesthesia and is followed by chapters on pain, local anaesthetics, nerve localisation, the physics of ultrasound and general principles of regional anaesthesia. In this section the authors have included topics such as wound infiltration techniques, paediatric regional techniques, peripheral catheters and training in regional anaesthesia. The first chapter, ‘A brief history of regional anaesthesia’, is interesting and provides a reasonably detailed account of the development of regional anaesthesia. The second chapter on the physiology of acute pain contains enough information for trainees appearing for the final Fellow of the Royal College of Anaesthetists examination and beyond. This is followed by a discussion on local anaesthetics and additives. The presentation between these two chapters varies, as the chapter on pain is predominantly text, while the chapter on local anaesthetics is supported with diagrams and pictures, which are helpful for a learner with a visual style. The authors discuss the use of adrenaline as an additive and adding adrenaline to local anaesthetic in two separate places, which may have been better in one place. In addition, some statements such as ‘there is no evidence that dexamethasone is more effective’ as an additive or via the intravenous route lacks support from references.

All other chapters in the first part, e.g. local anaesthetic toxicity, basic physics of ultrasound, principles and practice of anaesthesia and paediatric anaesthesia, have been brilliantly written and supported by the appropriate images. One of the highlights of the book is the chapter on training and assessment in regional anaesthesia. This chapter not only provides a worldwide view on training and assessment, but also offers regional anaesthetists an easy tool to assess their own competence and progress.

The remaining five parts of the book deal with all blocks that are routinely practiced in anaesthesia. The only missing blocks are newer techniques such as pectoralis interfascial blocks and serratus anterior plane blocks. All block descriptions follow the same structure, i.e. background, landmark technique, peripheral nerve stimulator technique, ultrasound technique and suggested indications for the block. This is followed by a brief introduction and detailed anatomy. The anatomical cross section of the axilla depicts the spatial relationship of various structures. The authors then discuss the complications and side effects. The peripheral nerve technique and ultrasound technique are described in detail supported by line diagrams for positioning and an ultrasound image of the axillary area. The highlight of the chapter is the ‘clinical notes’ section, which stems from the experience of the contributing author. The ultrasound image is indistinct, but nonetheless demonstrates and identifies all structures including vessels and nerves.

The book includes other uncommon techniques such as palatine, ethmoidal, superior laryngeal and recurrent laryngeal nerve blocks.

In summary, this handbook is an essential pocket book for trainees undertaking the Royal College of Anaesthetists examinations (FRCA), advanced regional anaesthesia fellowships, the European Diploma of Regional Anaesthesia (EDRA) examinations and while on regional anaesthesia rotation during their training. The book will also come in handy as a quick reference for blocks that an anaesthetist does not perform on a regular basis.

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