**Book reviews**

**On the Study and Practice of Intravenous Anaesthesia**

*J. Vuyk, F. Engbers & S. Groen-Mulder, eds*

Kluwer Academic Publishers, Dordrecht, 2000. 285 pp. £88.00.

This book is a summary of the last two EuroSIVA meetings in Barcelona and Amsterdam in 1998 and 1999 and is authored by the contributors and chairmen of those meetings. It is divided into four sections entitled: (i) modelling of anaesthetic action: the effect site; (ii) the peri-operative use of hypnotic agents; (iii) state of the art on neuromuscular blockade and (iv) opioids for peri-operative pain relief. Within the four sections, there is a mixture of information relating to both clinical anaesthesia and intensive care, and basic science and pharmacology.

Although ‘intravenous anaesthesia’ has often been a term relating to the administration of intravenous hypnotic and analgesic agents to maintain anaesthesia, the book has a wider context including neuromuscular blocking drugs, intensive care and postoperative analgesia. The depth of information within the chapters also varies and as a result it is not clear who the target audience is. Within the preface, the editors hope that the book will be of educational value for all involved in the science and clinical application of anaesthesia. However, such a wide audience may not be reached. For those with a specific interest in intravenous anaesthesia, many will have attended meetings where the topics have been discussed previously and much of the content of the book will already be familiar. For the clinical anaesthetist without a special interest, the scientific basis of some of the chapters may prove daunting and of little practical application. Although the science provides an excellent background, there is little help in ‘how to do it’ which is covered by the society’s workshops and are not included in the book.

The exception to this is the excellent chapter from Frank Engbers, which discusses the equipment for total intravenous anaesthesia and describes some of the specific practical pitfalls that exist in trying to deliver safe and reliable intravenous anaesthesia.

As a summary of two meetings, with at least five chapters within each section, there is inevitably a degree of repetition. This is especially noticeable in the chapters on anaesthetic action and hypnotic agents where the duplication of information on effect site and modelling is considerable. A greater degree of editorial input would have made the chapters more concise and the book easier to read. It is also unfortunate that there is a varied use of English in some chapters; this requires certain sections to be read several times to confirm the intended meaning and does not make the book easy to read. Several of the chapters also use figures that appear to have been imported from a verbal presentation where significant additional explanation may have been given. Having been placed into the printed media, the lack of this additional explanation does not always make the figures clear.

However, there are also some interesting areas that have been included. The chapter on genetic models relating to anaesthetic action may not be a commonly discussed topic and is not of direct clinical interest at the present time, but may help provide future insight into the mode of action of anaesthetic agents. The use of target-controlled infusions for postoperative analgesia is clearly experimental but the use of such concepts may further improve the analgesia provided for patients in future years.

Overall, for a book that aims to be of educational value, it is disappointing that greater clarity has not been provided within the volume for the novice who at times will be confused by the content. For the enthusiast, much of the content will be familiar; however, the extensive reference lists in some chapters will prove a very profitable source of reading material.

*J. E. Peacock*

**Anaesthesia and Intensive Care for Organ Transplantation**

*J. R. Klinck and M. J. Lindop, eds*

Chapman & Hall Medical, 1998. 396 pp. £85.00.

This book, edited by John Klinck and Mike Lindop from Addenbrookes Hospital but with many contributors from North America, is effectively in two sections. The chapters at either end are concerned with general issues, those in the middle relate to particular organs. It follows the modern trend for British books to be published in American English.

The first three chapters, on immunobiology, immunosuppression and organ preservation, cover the scientific understanding and advances which have made transplantation possible. Immunosuppression is a fast moving field and some of the trials awaited when it was written are now complete, but the main messages are unaffected. The fourth chapter covers organisational, legal and ethical issues associated with organ retrieval and transplantation. It compares the practice in different countries, including ‘opt out’ and ‘opt in’ arrangements but, surprisingly, it makes no mention of ‘elective ventilation’. The fifth chapter, on management of the organ donor, is clear and straightforward. Readers in the UK should be aware, however, that the Intensive Care Society and Department of Health state that the time of death should be recorded as the time of the first set of brain stem death tests, not the second as indicated here.

The majority of chapters are
concerned with transplantation of specific organs and the editors intend that these should be regarded as free-standing monographs. This has strengths and weaknesses. The standard, and the level of detail, is variable. All include some background on the disease processes, patient selection and the surgical procedure. Most of the authors describe the anaesthetic technique of their own institution and the reader might be best advised to regard these as one way of doing it rather than the way of doing it. Inevitably, perhaps, many statements are not supported by evidence. Several of the authors give their own views on management of the organ donor, some of which contradict the chapter devoted to the subject. I would have preferred a rather more robust editing.

The chapters on liver transplantation are particularly good. That on the kidney, which might be expected to be the most widely read, would be better with less anecdote, a more focused approach and more justification for specific therapies advocated. Anaesthesia and intensive care are treated separately for the heart, heart–lung, lung and liver. They might have been better combined, since there is often a degree of repetition and it is unlikely one will be read without the other. There are specific chapters devoted to paediatric heart, lung, liver and bone marrow transplantation. Pancreatic and intestinal transplants are also covered.

The final chapters again return to general issues that should be of widespread interest: infection, long-term outcome, anaesthesia for patients with a transplanted organ and, finally, the future of organ transplantation.

Who is this book for? Organ transplantation is no longer experimental but it is confined to a relatively small number of centres. Anaesthetists outwith these centres are increasingly called upon to care for patients with transplants, however, as they present with other conditions. This book provides a good overview for them and for trainees. It is well indexed and illustrated but the most recent reference is from 1997 and those already familiar with the field will probably find little that is new.

S. J. Mackenzie

Cardiovascular Drugs in the Perioperative Period
P. Foex, G. G. Harrison and L. H. Opie
Lippincott – Raven Publishers, 1999. 391 pp. £35.50.

A large proportion of patients presenting for surgery, cardiac and noncardiac, have coexisting cardiac disease. These patients often present with polypharmacy prescriptions attempting to control the symptoms of cardiovascular dysfunction, thus posing the anaesthetist with the challenge of deciding how best to manage these patients peri-operatively. When looking at this book I hoped this would go someway to helping me.

The first thing that strikes you about this book is its unusual size and shape. Presumably the book is designed to be carried in the pocket of a white coat for constant reference, advice and enlightenment. Why then include large sections on detailed cellular physiology and pharmacology? This is probably better left to formal textbooks rather than a book such as this, which has a different agenda. This ‘handbook’ is aimed at all grades of anaesthetists but more specifically trainees progressing through postgraduate examinations. It is designed as a portable compendium and reference book. The book aims to tackle an enormous field encompassing the physiology of myocardial cells, the autonomic nervous system and the cardiovascular system in general. In addition to this, the subjects of clinical cardiovascular pharmacology and the influence of anaesthetic agents upon all aspects of the cardiovascular system are included. All this is brought together in the later chapters by the application of these principles in the clinical setting of everyday encountered cardiac morbidity.

The book attempts to be a ‘jack of all trades’ in covering such a large scope in a handbook. The organisation of the book is good with a clear table of contents enabling easy access to a specific topic. The eminent editors have collated chapters from a variety of authors. Each chapter is extensively referenced and provides an excellent source for detailed reading on the aspects included in the chapter. However, as is often the case with multi-author books, the chapters are increasingly repetitive. The editors cite this issue and explain it as preparing standalone chapters, but the repetitive nature is irritating. Failings of the chapters are somewhat rectified by the clear concise summaries at the end of each section. The sections involved in the pharmacokinetics and pharmacodynamics of the various drugs are detailed synopses. The figures included attempt to summarise the detailed prose. The result, however, is too complex to follow the principles involved clearly and this is exacerbated by the size of the book.

The second half of the book conversely is more of interest to the practising clinician. This section provides current evidence-based reviews on the optimal methods of maximising cardiac function in various states of cardiac morbidity. The quality of these reviews is generally very good but the important issue of institution of peri-operative beta-blockade is only touched upon, but the references are provided for further investigation. The last two chapters involving ICU and resuscitation provide little new information and are much better covered elsewhere.

All faults considered, in my opinion, this book provides a generally good quality evaluation of the evidence to support treatment regimens in cardiovascular disease. It includes details on more of the newer drugs available and how they fit into the current armamentarium of the clinician. Did it fulfil what I wanted? Well, yes, but after ploughing through two-thirds of the book. In the role as a reference book for cardiovascular pharmacology for anaesthetists generally, it does attain its goal. I would certainly recommend this book for inclusion in any anaesthetic library, more than for the individual though. Change the shape and size, and stop pretending that people will actually carry it around with them.

R. Hughes