

## BOOK REVIEW

Our Editor has been sent the accompanying review of the Oxford Handbook of Anaesthesia. It expresses the view of a well known anaesthetist in Africa. I have told him that it should be published as it gives a viewpoint from a training centre in Africa. I have heard similar favorable comments in Australia. It is a very useful and compact book, full of information.

Kester Brown

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### Book Review

Oxford Handbook of Anaesthesia - Editors Allman and Wilson, ISBN 0 19 263273 6 Oxford University Press 2002, UK (www.oup.com), UK price £22.95, South Asia Indian Rupees 450. Available to readers in developing countries at a special price from Teaching Aids at Low Cost, talc@talcuk.org

I am not usually happy having much to do with books termed handbooks and short lecture notes. They often give you a taste when you need a good meal, but the new Oxford Handbook of Anaesthesia (OHA) edited by Drs. Allman and Wilson is not in that style. This handbook is exceptional value and is more like a concise comprehensive reference textbook with authoritative advice and is in a very readable format. I am sure it is going to be much sought after in many different parts of the world.

The OHA has been an instant success among our students doing the one year course in Anaesthesia in Uganda. For them its cost at £22 (US\$ 33) is a major proportion of their limited salary yet the majority of the current class have made me put in an order on their behalf. They are aware that the contents at this time are more than they require but they have discovered a reference book which is going to serve them well in years to come.

In the first world setting I am sure this book is going to be a major asset to residents and teachers and to the experienced practitioner who needs to be up to date in the sub speciality with which he or she only occasionally deals. To get a concise but comprehensive overview from a modern text book is not easy. It is often hard to see the wood for the trees and the information technology revolution has not given us the discerning judgements that are the foundation of good practice. The editors have given us an appropriate conciseness which is only possible with good judgement. The book has 1139 pages and it will fit into the pocket of a white coat but only just. There are 50 chapters divided into 7 sections. The sections include preoperative care, anaesthesia for the surgical specialities, obstetrics, paediatrics, emergency management, acute pain management, and regional blocks. The frequent lists for suggested reading are particularly useful for the reader wishing to go deeper. The format is ideal for the busy practitioner with paragraphs in bold headlines and each concise sentence packed with clear guidance. It is bound in a sturdy plastic cover that will survive many years of use.

I would have been happier to see ether included in volatile agents discussed, after all for a great part of the world this is the anaesthetic of choice and sometimes the only one available. Also perhaps a chapter on ketamine and some basic cardiorespiratory physiology would have made it more suitable for the novice and the teacher in this part of the world. However it will be my major reference book for the foreseeable future. It should be in every theatre and of course every library and I am sure it will become the personal property of many busy anaesthetists in many parts of the English speaking world.

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