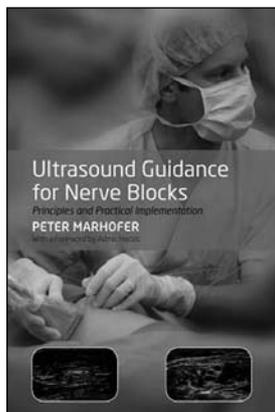


Book Reviews



Ultrasound Guidance for Nerve Blocks, Principles and Practical implementation

Peter Marhofer, *Oxford University Press* £24.95

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This compact paperback handbook is written by Peter Marhofer with contributions from Professors Kapral, Kettner and Willschke. All of these are respected regional anaesthetists from Vienna, arguably one of the pioneers and leading centres of ultrasound guided regional anaesthesia in Europe, with much published research.

Chapter 1 covers the principles of ultrasonography, including basic physics and the generation of ultrasound images, but should perhaps expand on image artefacts. The next three short chapters describe the advantages of ultrasound for regional anaesthesia, limitations of the techniques and technical and organizational considerations. Chapter 5 offers a good summary of the different appearances of nerves at various anatomical positions although rather glosses over the problems of “anisotropy”, which can seriously affect the imaging of nerves.

Usefully, this chapter also covers the ultrasound appearance of other structures, e.g. muscle, tendons, bones, blood vessels. Chapter 6 discusses needle guidance techniques, i.e. in plane versus out of plane. Whilst the Vienna group clearly have a preference for out of plane approach, they fail to provide a balanced argument or mention needle guidance devices.

There is little to criticize in the main chapters on neck, upper extremity, lower extremity and trunk blocks; each block is well described covering the anatomy (including recognized variants), ultrasound description and practical block technique. Several photos illustrate set up, orientation, ergonomics, hand and probe position, and there are plenty of labelled ultrasound images often showing the needle approach. Each block is also summarized in a table which details suggestions of ultrasound settings and patient positioning, anatomy and nerve appearance, needle choice and local anaesthetic volume. They also give an indication of block difficulty both for the technique and for the visualization of nerves. It is useful that, with each chapter or description of a block, there are one or two pertinent references for further reading.

Principally, this is a good book, which suffers (as all ultrasound books will do) by providing still images of what is a dynamic practical procedure. It usefully fills a gap between the large expensive textbooks of Bigeliesen, Gray and Chan and the numerous websites. It is the first, probably of many, pocketbooks of ultrasound guided regional anaesthesia on the market and it will be interesting to see how future competition matches up.

Paul Warman

Regional Anaesthesia Fellow
Royal Devon and Exeter
Foundation Trust
Exeter UK
EX2 5DW

Correspondence Email:
paul.warman@rdefn.nhs.uk