Call me old-fashioned, but there is nothing like the pleasure of sitting in your study at the end of a busy day, when everything else is settled, with hot coffee in one hand and flipping through the pages of a brand-new book with the other. The aroma of the freshly printed pages just magnifies the pleasure even more. I do realize that I am part of a dying breed, in the midst of Nooks and Kindles, but the charm of that scenario makes me a little uneasy, but that quickly gave way to pure joy (more than 1,100 pages, plus the online section) did initially make me a little uneasy, but that quickly gave way to pure joy and appreciation of the excellent effort put in by everyone involved.

This was exactly the pleasure I was fortunate to relish when I was presented with the opportunity to review *Essential Clinical Anesthesia*, edited by Charles A. Vacanti, M.D., and his team. I must confess that the sheer size of the book (more than 1,100 pages, plus the online section) did initially make me a little uneasy, but that quickly gave way to pure joy and appreciation of the excellent effort put in by everyone involved.

The first thing that struck me about this book was its excellent color design. It has a visually pleasing and nondistracting color scheme. All of the highlights of the book, including headings, tables, and significant portions of diagrams and graphs, are in various shades of blue. I personally found this very gentle and soothing to my eyes, and could concentrate on the subject matter better. This is a refreshing departure from the current trend of packing so many colors into medical textbooks that after a while they look like a page out of my child’s coloring book.

Another bold step is in its format. As mentioned in the preface of the book, the text is divided into a large number of short chapters. The book has 19 sections and 184 chapters, the majority of which are in print while others are online. The online chapters are free, easy to access, and cover special topics of interest. Each chapter is well written, informative, short enough to finish in one sitting by most, and adequately supported by tables, figures, and diagrams. The topics of interest are readily available as separate chapters rather than as a heading hidden somewhere inside a long and complicated chapter. That helps the reader concentrate on what they are actually looking for. The content is up-to-date and objective, keeping the target audience in mind. There are useful suggested further readings at the end of each chapter for the reader who wants to delve further into the topic.

This book is ideally suited for quick review and reference by anesthesia trainees and busy practitioners. Shortcomings of this book are few and far between, if you keep the declared goal in perspective. According to the authors, this book is meant to be a bridge between the classic anesthesiology texts and the modern clinical texts and, in my humble opinion, it does achieve a substantial part of that goal and then some. Basic clinical texts tend to have a reputation of being either too small in size or too shallow in content, and this book has successfully steered away from both of those pitfalls. At $85, the book is a good deal; two thumbs up to the book’s creators.

Now, back to my study, my book, and my cup of coffee.


Tracheostomies are one of the more common, as well as the earliest recorded, surgical procedures. According to the editors of *Tracheostomies: The Complete Guide*, Dr. Linda L. Morris and Dr. M. Sherif Afifi, the nature of compartmentalized health care in medicine does not allow for a clear overview of the continuum of care for patients with tracheostomies. Surgeons, anesthesiologists, intensivists, respiratory therapists, and nurses need to be aware of the “fine details of daily care of patients with tracheostomies, to help [themselves] make appropriate decisions and educate their patients.” Those fine details are just what this book provides.

This book is informative and concise; its focused chapters provide an extraordinary amount of relevant information. The chapters are very logically ordered, starting with the functional anatomy of the airway and ranging to various aspects of patient care. The book effectively balances basic science background and clinical information. The first few chapters provide a detailed review of the anatomy, physiology, and basic science of various surgical techniques. The later chapters delve into more clinical subjects, such as detailed explanations of numerous patient-related issues. Each