
Obesity is indeed a worsening epidemic, as Dr. Brodsky describes in the preface to the first edition of Morbid Obesity: Peri-operative Management. The problem is truly extensive-reaching across both ethnic/racial and socioeconomic backgrounds. Rare indeed is the perioperative medical team member who does not encounter a patient living with this health problem. The second edition of this book is very much needed to inform practitioners of recent updates in medical knowledge of the disease and how best to care for morbidly obese patients who undergo surgical procedures. The second edition is also more concise, with brief, focused chapters written by experts on the topics discussed. The chapters are very logically ordered into five sections discussing the pathophysiology, preoperative evaluation, intraoperative care, and postoperative care of this complex patient population. The fifth section deals with special topics, such as organizing a bariatric team and the care of the obese pediatric and obstetric patient. Although this book does an excellent job of highlighting the perioperative concerns for patients undergoing bariatric surgery, the breadth of this text extends much further, with the goal of preparing the anesthesia care provider to manage obese patients regardless of the type of procedure being performed.

Each chapter is designed to be short and to the point, while at the same time delivering key points that are often very clinically oriented. Very little information is repeated across chapters and, when information is repeated, the content emphasizes a different aspect of the information given. For instance, the chapter on pathophysiology of the pneumoperitoneum highlights how patient positioning and ventilatory changes are affected by carbon dioxide insufflation of the abdomen. These effects are also outlined as a subset of other morbid effects of obesity. Later chapters delve into more clinical subjects, such as detailed explanations of various weight loss procedures, airway management of obese patients, and methods of monitoring vital signs in obese individuals. The chapter on regional anesthesia appropriately weights the potential advantages of regional anesthesia against some of the very real technical considerations, such as having needles of sufficient length and the use of ultrasound for peripheral nerve blocks.

In addition, the chapter outlining the proper choice of anesthetic agents clarifies the position that propofol dosing should be based on total body weight, whereas remifentanil dosages should consider an individual’s lean body weight. Clinicians will also find that the book provides excellent discussion of postoperative care and intensive care concerns such as rhabdomyolysis, deep venous thrombosis prophylaxis, and nursing care. Complications after bariatric surgery are also outlined, including an exceptional review of the nutritional effect of bariatric surgery such as vitamin B12 deficiency, inadequate protein intake, and considerations for patients undergoing anesthesia after bariatric procedures.

Overall, this book should be on the shelf of any provider who regularly cares for obese patients. The book’s easy-to-read chapters and efficiently indexed information make it a very useful tool for quick reference in the operating room or preoperative assessment setting. The text is filled with easy-to-read figures and tables, which only enhances its usefulness in clinical practice. The editors even provide a list of abbreviations in the front of the book. The editors have clearly achieved their goal of providing a comprehensive yet very accessible manual for the care of the morbidly obese patient.

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(accepted for publication March 25, 2011.)


Obesity affects all aspects of perioperative care in all age groups. Obese patients undergoing bariatric surgery typically have thorough preoperative evaluations and preconditioning preparations, making their anesthetic management routine. The clinical anesthesia challenge is that most morbidly obese patients having surgery do not undergo bariatric procedures. As a result, anesthesia providers are faced with both technical and clinical challenges in managing morbidly obese patients for procedures not involving weight loss, often without sufficient experience or insight into mitigating risk beyond those related to airway management.

Michael J. Avram, Ph.D., Editor
Perioperative Anesthetic Care of the Obese Patient provides an extraordinary amount of relevant information regarding obesity that is easily digested and applied in most perioperative settings. This informative and concise textbook is divided into sections (Preoperative, Intraoperative, Postoperative, and Special Situations), with each section addressing important clinical and physiologic aspects of care encountered in that venue. The editing is exceptional in that very little repetition or conflicting information is presented, and the information is well organized and thoughtfully presented.

In the Preoperative section, each organ system is represented from the perspective of basic physiology and the organic dysfunction resulting from obesity. The information presented emphasizes observations reported from recent, obesity-related human studies relevant to a particular organ system. This section effectively balances basic science background and clinical studies, allowing the clinician an unbiased presentation of information relevant to obesity and anesthetic management. A busy clinician can reference a particular chapter and quickly access useful information, making this a valuable reference tool in clinical practice.

The Intraoperative section is as useful and relevant as the preceding one. Obesity creates a challenging environment for anesthesia personnel, not only because of the need for appropriate drug dosing but also for issues related to positioning, monitoring, and regional anesthesia procedures. These topics are concisely and thoroughly presented. Much like the Preoperative chapters, the Intraoperative chapters emphasize clinical studies without becoming a “How To” atlas. I believe the great beauty of this book is that the reader is given the information necessary to understand the relevant challenges of intraoperative management of the obese patient without being distracted by authors advocating their point of view. The important issues are distilled, presented to the reader without bias, and can be readily referenced if intraoperative issues arise in clinical practice.

The Postoperative section reaffirms the fact that obese patients present unique challenges (respiratory, infection, analgesia, and thromboembolic) after surgery but not necessarily greater morbidity or mortality. Postoperative management (e.g., oxygen therapy, ambulation, deep venous thrombosis prophylaxis, and analgesia) of the obese patient is certainly more difficult than in the physically fit patient. However, in terms of morbidity and mortality of the obese patient after surgery, there are no overwhelming data suggesting the obese patient is at higher risk than the nonobese patient. This section carefully presents clinical data addressing common issues during both the early and late postoperative periods for the obese surgical patient. The section on critical care is an honest appraisal of clinical care for the critically ill obese patient and common obesity-related management challenges in the intensive care setting. With emphasis on clinical studies, the information is unbiased, honest, and clearly presented to the reader.

The Special Situations section presents the implications for anesthetic management of the obese patient in the labor and delivery ward, pediatric anesthesia practice, and trauma care. As in the other sections, each topic is focused on relevant recent clinical studies without author bias endorsing one approach or technique over another. The authors avoid stating obvious and basic information, instead focusing on key concepts and observations made in cited references.

I strongly recommend this book for not only anesthesia providers but also departmental libraries. The information is certainly not as extensive as that provided by the major anesthesiology textbooks, but the focused review of current clinical information regarding the effect of obesity on organ function and anesthetic management makes this book invaluable. Congratulations to the authors and editors for producing this much-needed, high-quality text.

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(Accepted for publication March 28, 2011.)