
Our current understanding of neuromodulation and pharmacology has yielded several advances in the field of pain medicine. The use of implantable devices for pain management has significantly increased the number of treatment options available to patients living with chronic pain. The general categories for such devices include neurostimulation and drug-delivery systems. Neuromodulation provides patients sustained pain relief and an alternative to the ill effects of long-term opioid use; intrathecal pumps provide a higher degree of effectiveness of medications compared with other more traditional routes of administration. The Atlas of Implantable Therapies for Pain Management is a clear and concise technical guide that focuses on the practical application of these therapeutic modalities.

The Atlas of Implantable Therapies for Pain Management is arranged in four primary sections. The first three focus on neurostimulation of the spine, the peripheral nervous system, and the head, and they begin with a preface that outlines a brief historical background providing the reader with an interesting account of their origin and their influence on the devices we use today. The necessary basics of indications for implantation and patient selection are subsequently addressed. This is followed by a description of each procedure in the various applications of these devices. The last section moves on to address drug delivery systems in the chronic pain patient.

The authors discuss the technical aspects of each procedure on a step-by-step basis. Specifically, they outline placement, tunneling, anchoring, and pocketing for each implantable device and procedure. This is supplemented by a plethora of images and x-ray films, which lead the reader through the procedural details in an exquisitely precise manner. Images include the optimal angle of needle insertion during lead placement, the suture configuration for strong anchoring, and visual examples of intraoperative pitfalls. Finally, the authors emphasize the common risks at each stage. Multiple sections are dedicated to complications and their management, a testament to the thoroughness and practicality of this book.

In addition to discussing the basic concepts, this book includes advanced applications and techniques of neuromodulation. It details procedures, such as retrograde electrode insertion, deep brain stimulation, and the use of electromyography/somatosensory evoked potentials monitoring for spinal cord mapping and appropriate lead placement. Furthermore, few texts address device management postimplantation. With regard to nerve stimulation, the text touches on programming principles to achieve the desired therapeutic effect, a subject that is often overlooked. With respect to intrathecal pumps, proper drug selection is outlined, as is continued delivery maintenance.

Despite its technical nature, one of the most notable features of the text is the authors’ abilities to direct even a novice practitioner, with the aid of descriptive illustrations and summary tables in each chapter. These illustrations constitute a unique feature of this textbook and strongly affirm its superiority over other excellent books on this topic. This atlas would be most helpful not only for a pain-management fellow early in training but also for any provider trying to improve his/her technique.

In summary, the Atlas of Implantable Therapies for Pain Management is a practical, extremely thorough, and well-organized guide for the pain physician. It touches on all of the salient features of implantable devices, focusing on technical skills crucial to interventional pain therapies. We are certain that the pain community will welcome this book with enthusiasm and will undoubtedly benefit from such a complete and comprehensive textbook. The authors of this book are to be commended for their valuable and unprecedented contribution. We strongly recommend it to all the pain physicians who perform implantable therapies for chronic pain management.

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I have a confession to make … Neuroanesthesia is my first love! There you go, I said it!

So I really had my “neurotransmitters” in overdrive mode when I got the opportunity to review Core Topics in Neuroanesthesia and Neurointensive Care, by Dr. Matta and his team. Unlike many other specialized fields of modern medicine,
neuroanesthesia and neurointensive care have never enjoyed the luxury of having a plethora of quality texts, barring a few. So when the call came, my response was obvious!

The first thing that struck me when I held the book in my hand was its convenient size. That perfectly serves the declared purpose of this book, which is meant for conveniently accessible quick reference. I can easily see the reader tucking it in his/her carry bag to work for quick and definitive reference. I believe that is a big part of the demographic that the authors hope to target through this text.

Also interesting is an almost complete lack of vibrant and overzealous use of color in the design and text material of this book, which I must quickly add is not necessarily a bad thing. To be fair, for the more visually inclined there is a section of color plates in the middle of the book containing excellent-quality and relevant color photographs, imaging scans, line diagrams, among others. This design scheme, consisting mainly of black and white and different shades of gray, is not completely bereft of its admirers. In fact, as a reader, I personally get distracted by too much color in serious medical texts, which seems to be the norm these days. The simple design scheme of this book also keeps the production costs low, which is critical for books like these as they are not meant for mass consumption but are aimed at a niche readership.

Basic concepts in applied physiology and pharmacology, anesthesia, and critical care are increasingly being recognized as a part of the continuum of quality patient care and outcome. As is nicely described by the authors in the Preface of the book, “Practice in related subspecialty areas of anesthesia and critical care often relies on a common knowledge base and skill sets. Neuroanesthesia and neurocritical care represent areas of subspecialty practice where such interdependence is arguably most relevant.” To that goal, the text in the book is conveniently divided into four sections of applied clinical physiology and pharmacology, monitoring and imaging, neuroanesthesia, and neurointensive care, with a total of 36 chapters. This represents a perfect continuum of knowledge progression and keeps the reader’s thought process streamlined and the topics relevant and focused. The authors have also done a commendable job of including most of the relevant topics while restricting the text to fewer than 500 pages.

There is a certain novelty to simplicity and this book is a perfect example of that. The easy-to-read and understand narrative of this book will strike a chord even in the most uninitiated. The authors, who are well-respected experts in this field, have been able to incorporate the latest information on fundamental physiologic concepts, advanced monitoring technologies, and clinical research and outcome analysis data into the text in such a way that the reader is neither intimidated nor distracted. A lot of emphasis is on the latest developments in neuromonitoring over the last decade, with extensive discussions on topics such as cerebral microdialysis, computer-aided multimodal monitoring and outcome analysis, near-infrared spectroscopy, and others. Along with the traditional topics in neuroanesthesia, there are also chapters dedicated to neuromuscular disorders, central nervous system infections and inflammation, and death and organ donation, as well as ethical and legal issues.

The chapters are well written and contain up-to-date information. The authors provide a list of suggested further readings at the end of each chapter. One could argue that there could be a scope for more specific references in the text. But, considering the stated objectives and the target readership of the book, that is just a minor point. In my humble opinion, in handling such complex and intimidating subjects as neuroanesthesia and neurointensive care, Dr. Matta and his team have been able to strike a delicate balance between a comfortable easy-to-grasp narrative and depth and richness of content.

And, Neuroanesthesia, you will always be my first love!

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