BOOK REVIEW

Carol A. Hirshman, M.D., Editor

Anesthesia for Ambulatory Surgery. Second Edition. EDITED BY
BÉNARDO WETCHLER. Philadelphia, J. B. Lippincott, 1990. Pages:
690. Price: $69.50.

I am pleased that a second edition of this highly popular text has
been published. Although the chapter titles remain essentially the same,
each chapter has been thoroughly revised, updated, and often enlarged.
It is not surprising that in the process the book has increased from
476 pages to 690 pages. Dr. Bernard Wetchler, the editor, is a pioneer
in the field of outpatient anesthesia as well as one of the founders of
the Society for Ambulatory Anesthesia (SAMA). He should also re-
ceive a major portion of the credit for establishing the subspecialty
of ambulatory anesthesia in the United States.

The text’s organization is very logical throughout and should appeal
to practicing anesthesiologists. Not only are the anesthetic aspects of
various types of outpatient surgery well covered in the various chapters,
but the administrative, legal, organizational, planning, and marketing
aspects are also discussed with authority. In addition, Dr. Wetchler
maintains excellent uniformity throughout and generally avoids the
common problem of unnecessary repetition by the different authors
from chapter to chapter.

I was impressed by several features of this book. Short biographies
of the authors are included at the beginning of the text and provide
a personal touch. The unmistakable tone throughout is one of “prac-
ticality.” The editor has carefully chosen authors who are good clinicians
themselves. Instead of simply reviewing the available literature, the
authors make it a point to provide interpretations of specific problems
and descriptions of how these problems are handled at their individual
institutions. The writing style is clear and easy to understand. One
approach used in several chapters is to stimulate provocative discussions
by posing common controversial questions or citing interesting case
reports. This is most evident in the chapters entitled “Problem Solving
in the Postanesthesia Care Units,” “Complications,” “Legal Implica-
tions,” and “In the Real World.”

The chapter “Ambulatory Surgery: Past, Present and Future,”
written by a nonanesthesiologist, gives a first-rate account of the history
of outpatient anesthesia in the United States (though it generally ignores
the rest of the world) and a convincing insight into the future. “Selec-
tion” and “Pediatric Patients” are both well-written chapters. Although
very informative, the chapter “Adult and Geriatric Patients” (112 pages
long, with 449 references) could certainly be condensed. The chapters
entitled “Local and Regional Anesthesia” and “A Successful Facility”
are also excellent.

In such a high-quality book, however, it is distressing to see such
sweeping statements as “patients at risk of developing acid aspiration
syndrome have been defined as those with gastric pH below 2.5 and
gastric volume above 25 ml” (page 208) or “outpatients who were at
highest risk for acid aspiration, i.e., gastric volume > 25 ml and pH
< 2.5” (page 465). Although this misconception is unfortunately still
rampant in the “scientific” literature, no one so far has shown this to
be true in humans. Thus, the conclusions of innumerable published
papers based on this incorrect premise are questionable. Unproven
statements like these appearing in a contemporary text tend to per-
petuate this misconception.

A final unique and useful feature of this book is the compilation of
“Forms and Policy Statements” from a number of ambulatory surgery
facilities in the United States and one from the United Kingdom. This
section will be very helpful to persons establishing or revamping their
ambulatory surgery practices and policies.

In summary, the second edition of this premier text on outpatient
anesthesia is a great improvement over the previous edition. It is a
very practical and tremendously informative volume. Lessons learned
from the practice of outpatient anesthesia already are influencing the
practice of anesthesia in all other fields. I recommend that every anes-
thesia care provider who is interested in the tremendous advances taking
place in this new—and still emerging—subspecialty acquire a copy of
this book.

SUJIT K. PANDIT, M.D.
Professor of Anesthesiology
Department of Anesthesiology
University of Michigan School of Medicine
1G323 University Hospital
1500 East Medical Center Drive
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109-0048

ERRATUM

In the review of Anesthesiology and Vascular Surgery, edited by M. P. Yeager and D. D. Glass (Ellis J: Book
reviews, ANESTHESIOLOGY 74:636, 1991), the pages and price listed were incorrect. The correct number
of pages is 395, and the correct price is $75.00.