

from both sides of the Atlantic bring out some interesting treatment differences. The American authors advocate high-dose methyl prednisolone for patients with acute spinal trauma and intravenous heparin for small or moderate-sized ischaemic strokes, neither are routine practice in the UK.

Each chapter ends with a summary of recommendations to serve as an *aide-memoire* and a full set of up-to-date references. This book should be read by those who decide initial management of neurological emergencies; it is not a book to be carried 'on take' but the summary boxes could usefully be photocopied, annotated and stuck into a notebook in a white coat pocket.

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Ophthalmology

Ophthalmology, 2nd edn, HB Chawla. pp viii + 354, illustrated. Churchill Livingstone, London, 1994. £14.95, paperback. ISBN 4430 47669

As a basic introductory text to ophthalmology, the second edition of this popular book is difficult to equal. This is not because of its comprehensiveness and erudition, which to be pedantic is less than perfect (although usually adequate) in a few areas, but because of its unique style, wit and eminent readability.

The author's style is fluent and prosaic and the text abounds with helpful, as well as

entertaining, metaphors and similes. He employs the principle of 'complexity is but simplicity multiplied' to great effect resulting in clear and concise explanations and effortlessly avoids laborious or verbose descriptions.

The book is up-to-date and covers the important areas of recent development, a significant feature in such a rapidly changing speciality. The order of the chapters and subject matter is somewhat idiosyncratic, consisting of a mixture based sometimes on differential diagnoses, sometimes anatomical classification and sometimes specific diseases. The section on pupillary reflexes and their interpretation is not clear and poorly illustrated, and many ophthalmologists would take issue with the reliability of digital assessment of intraocular pressure, which he supports.

However, the only criticisms of this book are minor ones, and it would be inappropriate to detract from the overall appeal and usefulness of this exceptionally delightful and painless introduction to ophthalmology.

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Pain and childbirth

Pain and its relief in childbirth, G Chamberlain, A Wraight, P Steer, eds. pp 154, illustrated. Churchill Livingstone, London, 1993. £55.00, hardback. ISBN 0443 04658 1

This book describes the results of a survey, conducted by the National Birthday Trust, of pain during childbirth and its relief. The survey is comprehensive, covering not only all women delivering during a week in June 1990 (10 000 women) but also their midwives, all medical attendants, partners, neonatal consequences and a follow-up survey at six weeks. As such it gives much information about the availability of different analgesic techniques, their efficacy and consequences.

This information is reasonably easily extracted from the text although many data are presented as both tables and figures which are not always easy to interpret. The inclusion of numerous anecdotal comments both improves readability and personalises the text. These are all from mothers and their partners; some comment reflecting staff attitudes would be of interest.

The findings emphasise the importance to women of feeling in control during labour and of the value of education and communication in achieving this. Whilst most women are happy with their analgesia, problems were identified with TENS, pethidine, the limited availability of epidurals, and analgesia for perineal repair. Conclusions and recommendations are succinctly present in a separate chapter.

This book is of value to those who plan or organise obstetric analgesic services. It should be made available to all those who provide such services. Publication of the summary as a separate booklet would aid the further dissemination of the findings of the survey.

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Books received

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Capnography, D O'Flaherty, pp 108, illustrated. British Medical Journal, London, 1994. £16.95, paperback.

Contributions to obstetrics and gynaecology, vol 3, SS Ratnam, DK Sen, N Soon-Chye, S Arulkumaran, pp 230, illustrated. Churchill Livingstone, London, 1994. £60.00, paperback.

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