

An Introductory Curriculum for Ultrasound-Guided Regional Anesthesia

Brian A. Pollard Vincent W. S. Chan; illustrations by Diana Kryski; photographs by Michele Dalgarno. Toronto: B. A. Pollard, 2010. ISBN: 978-0-7727-8735-4. \$95.00.

Forty years after Dr. Alon Winnie described the paresthesia technique for interscalene blockade, evolving technology enables clinicians to see and differentiate anatomic structures in real time. The growing interest in ultrasound-guided regional anesthesia (UGRA) has been an exciting, landmark development in the practice of regional anesthesia and pain medicine. The authors' of *An Introductory Curriculum for Ultrasound-Guided Regional Anesthesia*, Drs. Pollard and Chan, are well-known and accomplished leaders in this emerging field.

With this new technology comes responsibility. Spirited debate now surrounds the definition of core competencies, training requirements, competency assessment, institutional certification for UGRA practice, and strategies for quality improvement in UGRA. In writing these introductory curriculums on UGRA, the authors have appropriately side-stepped these issues and focused instead on a more important founding principle for their text—patient safety.

As is stated by the authors, the goal in writing this book was “to create an educational curriculum that will permit a self-directed foundational path for clinicians, from novice to expert, community and academic-based, to build on existing regional anesthesia expertise by integrating essential ultrasound techniques into daily practice.” They accomplish this task through nine chapters in five well-organized sections.

Section 1 (39 pages) is the largest and constitutes almost half of the text. Starting with physics as applied to ultrasonography, this section then confronts the fundamentals of ultrasound scanning and needle techniques. Sections 2, 3, and 4 categorize nerve blocks into introductory, intermediate, and advanced designations. Chapters within these sections cover the most commonly performed ultrasound-guided nerve blocks. Finally, section 5 describes the use of UGRA to assist with conventionally performed epidural and subarachnoid blocks.

An ubiquitous debate continues among practitioners as to what constitutes an “introductory” block versus an “advanced” block, which can be seen as a potential weakness in this presentation. For example, many clinicians may not find a selective block of the radial nerve “easier” than a conventional ultrasound-guided approach to the brachial plexus.

Each chapter ends with a salient summary, as well as 4 to 6 key references for the self-directed learner. The fundamental learning points of the chapter are then listed as useful “knowledge keys.” Esthetics were not overlooked in the production of the text, which presents superior illustrations and an excellent collection of images. Often, images and illustrations are combined into impressive and thoughtful

schematics detailing phenomena such as reverberation artifact. The high-quality images and illustrations are a major strength of the book.

Each chapter reads easily, yet with only 81 pages and lacking references, this is not meant to be a comprehensive textbook on the topic. Rather, it nicely complements existing resources, and as such represents one of the finest presentations on basic UGRA concepts available to practitioners. The emphasis on competency with imaging is appropriate and is reflected in the fact that the bulk of the text material addresses this skill set. Specific clinical recommendations, such as type of local anesthetic and volume selection, are not emphasized.

As interest in the use of UGRA in clinical practice and education continues to expand, efforts to optimize patient safety and minimize risk should be at the forefront. Although no evidence exists to support this claim, one could reasonably hypothesize that poor UGRA technique may increase the risk of associated complications. To that end, this text is an essential resource for UGRA educators and would be an excellent addition to all libraries on regional anesthesia.

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Visionaries and Dreamers: The Story of Founding Fathers of Anesthesiology in Israel

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Visionaries and Dreamers is a series of accounts about pioneers of Israeli anesthesiology. The author, Gabriel M. Gurman, MD, is a Professor Emeritus of Anesthesiology and Critical Care at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, and both Hebrew and English translations were edited by Lior Granot. Dr. Gurman provides the details of the lives of innovative anesthesiologists through a series of interviews and is able to capture compelling stories of adversity and eventual triumphs. As the lives of these 12 anesthesiologists are described, the reader is pulled into what seems like an almost “sacred circle of leaders.” As an anesthesiologist, it was helpful to see how the book breaks down the elements of their leadership, and sheds light on each of these qualities separately: the importance of building a vision, the value of being bold and unconstrained by established rules, and having the foresight to build a solid, trustworthy team. These are invaluable lessons that would help the professional careers of all aspiring anesthesiologists.