

Book & New Media Reviews



QBase Anaesthesia, Volume no. 5 MCQs for the Final FRCA

Edward Hammond, Andrew McIndoe (Editors).
Cambridge University Press, 2006. \$50 US. CD-ROM/Paperback 0-521-67705-X

This handbook with an accompanying compact disc (CD) is intended as a study aid for the first stage of the Royal College of Anaesthetists Examinations in the United Kingdom. This examination is negatively marked, meaning that the candidate loses marks for guessing. Passing the examination involves not only having some knowledge, but also having the confidence to answer enough questions to score an adequate number of points.

The CD and book contain five examinations of 60 questions each, with explanatory notes and references. Taking the test on CD allows one to track one's confidence level for each answer as "positive", "educated guess" or "complete guess". Correct options can be viewed, with explanations, and the score tallied on each question. On completion of the examination, analysis includes the total score, score by content area, and confidence level. One can choose to review any subset of questions according to the mark attained.

The software is easy to use. When selecting the "show answers" option, correct answers are transiently highlighted in red. This would be easier to use if the answers remained highlighted until the operator completed that function, as I found myself clicking on this several times before I had checked all my answers.

The book refers to questions as being multiple choice, but they are not in the same MCQ format as the Canadian Royal College examination. The Canadian examination provides a stem question, and then asks candidates to select one of four possible options as the correct answer. This book uses a stem to loosely define a topic, and then asks five questions about that subject, each of which may be true or false.

The scope of content is broad, including anaesthesia, anatomy, physiology, pharmacology, medicine, surgery, clinical measurement, and critical care. I found the questions to be clinically oriented and clearly worded. There are some questions about drugs or equipment not in current use in Canada, such as

cyclopropane. Some of the medical and surgical content was more detailed than I would have expected on an anaesthesia examination.

The notes provided are all clearly referenced from a wide variety of sources including standard textbooks and published articles. However, most of the references are from the mid to late '90s, including texts such as Miller's *Anesthesia Fourth Edition*, and Barash's *Clinical Anesthesia Second Edition*, which were published in 1994 and 1992 respectively. Considering the time required to prepare a new edition of a reference text, added to the time required to devise this book, some of the material may be outdated. Another limitation is that some of the notes lack information about all of the five questions asked. Other notes provide additional information about the subject in question, resulting in a lengthy paragraph. It would be easier to find the required information if the notes were divided numerically to match the corresponding questions.

In summary, this book/CD comprises a good study tool, forcing the participant to be actively engaged in testing her/his knowledge of clinically relevant facts over a broad scope of content. It does not specifically prepare the candidate for the format of the Canadian Royal College exam.

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Nunn's Applied Respiratory Physiology – Sixth Edition

Andrew B. Lumb. Butterworth Heinemann, 2005, 520 pages, 294 illustrations. ISBN 0-7506-8791-6

Nunn's *Applied Respiratory Physiology* has been one of the definitive texts on the subject since the first edition was published in 1969; every edition thereafter was reprinted at least two or three times. The fifth edition (2000) represented a significant change for this important reference work in that it was authored by Dr. Nunn's successor at the University of Leeds, Dr. Andrew Lumb (Consultant Anaesthetist, St. James University Hospital). The fifth edition included the addition of a section on the pathophysiology and

treatment of respiratory disease in addition to the two major sections of the text dealing with basic principles (composition and changes in the atmosphere, anatomy, respiratory control, O₂ and CO₂ transport, ventilation-perfusion relationships, a new chapter on the history of respiratory physiology, etc) and applied physiology (high altitude physiology, hyperbaric and diving medicine, exercise, sleep, sleep apnea, pregnancy, pollution, anesthesia, etc).

The sixth edition is presented in a format different from the fifth – the layout is more readable, illustrations are presented in colour and are easier to follow, and each chapter starts with a summary of between three and six “pearls”. All chapters have been updated, in particular those sections dealing with the molecular basis of respiratory function and disease, but in some cases the changes are minimal. The book retains the format of having a large number of definitions, tables and charts in the appendices, which makes for a certain amount of turning to and from the last section of the book.

The two major sections of the book dealing with basic and applied respiratory physiology are truly excellent, indeed the definitive reference on this material, but the sections dealing with respiratory physiology during and after anesthesia/surgery are not as detailed as one would like. (It must be acknowledged that Dr. Lumb himself describes this section of his book as “not intended to be comprehensive”). For example, the sections on the pathophysiology of one-lung ventilation and management thereof, the changes in respiratory function associated with neuraxial anesthesia, and the recovery of respiratory function following abdominal surgery are simply not detailed enough for a senior anesthesia resident preparing for examinations. Similarly the chapter on respiratory support and mechanical ventilation in the intensive care unit setting does not provide quite enough detail on some of the newer modes of therapy.

The Sixth Edition of Nunn’s Applied Respiratory Physiology remains a key reference source and should be available in every department of anesthesia library. Canadian anesthesiologists and anesthesia residents will be equally well served, however, indeed better served in some areas, by careful review of the appropriate chapters in the latest editions of the major North American anesthesia textbooks.

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