

lent introduction to the topic. This soft-cover book is organized with an organ-system-based table of contents, which allows the reader to rapidly look up key topics in the practice of critical care. Each chapter is organized with major headings and subheadings, which makes for exceptionally easy reading and use of this reference work.

The first part of the book, "The Respiratory System," presents the essentials of 14 major topics in patient care. Topics as diverse as mechanical ventilation, acute respiratory distress syndrome, and the use of chest radiography are covered. The chapter on mechanical ventilation is excellent in that it gives the practitioner a concise introduction to the topic. All of the chapters in this section and in the whole book can be used by both students and experienced practitioners, and the brief way that topics are handled can be useful to all types of health care providers, therapists, nurses, and physicians.

The book covers many uncommon diseases, which makes it an excellent text to have in the intensive care unit library; Part 4, "Renal and Metabolic Issues," is a good illustration of this. Acid-base disturbances are described in helpful tables that would assist rapid diagnosis and treatment. Flow charts help to organize one's thoughts in approaching acid-base disturbance problems. I believe the most experienced attending would find this helpful for both patient care and the education of students.

Many broad-based topics are introduced in the section, "Miscellaneous Intensive Care Unit Topics." The reader is introduced to such topics as end-of-life issues, which is highly timely. The last chapter in this section, "Marik's Evidence-Based Commonsense Critical Care Rules," ends the book on a note of humor.

Overall, this is an excellent introduction to the concept of evidence-based medicine. It will be most helpful for students and junior staff members during their first rotation in intensive care. Since it is a true white-coat-pocket book, students can carry it on bedside rounds for easy reference. Nursing and respiratory care professionals will also find this book "a must" to introduce them to the broad-based field of critical care medicine. The writing is clear, logical, and highly organized, which makes for fast and enjoyable reading. I believe this book will get daily use in most intensive care units, by a wide range of readers.

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Mechanisms of Organ Dysfunction in Critical Illness. Timothy W Evans MD PhD and Mitchell P Fink MD, Editors. (Update in Intensive Care Medicine, Volume 38, Jean-Louis Vincent MD PhD, Series Editor) New York: Springer-Verlag. 2002. Soft cover, illustrated, 410 pages, U.S. \$50, €49.95.

This book is a continuation of the very successful Update in Intensive Care Medicine series and aims to provide a state-of-the-art overview of many aspects of the pathophysiology of organ dysfunction in critical illness. As a basic scientist and physician, I was intrigued by the topic and excited to explore a collection of reviews from leading researchers in the biological and clinical aspects of critical care, as compiled by 2 prominent authorities in the field. After spending the last 2 months examining the book as both a reference resource and as educational reading, I have to say the results were mixed.

Given the burgeoning field of critical care research, which now integrates nearly every discipline of basic and clinical science, the topic of organ dysfunction is an important one, and the goal of assembling a collection such as this is admirable, if a bit daunting. The contents of **Mechanisms of Organ Dysfunction in Critical Illness** encompass a broad survey of the topic, ranging from mitochondrial biology and mechanisms of inflammation to organ-specific sections on the lung, kidney, gastrointestinal tract, and brain. Though this compilation is geared to those with more than a passing interest in and understanding of molecular and cellular biology, many of the chapters are accessible and of interest to a broad audience of both research and clinical personnel, providing an excellent primer in such topics as ventilator-induced lung injury and pulmonary vascular dysfunction in systemic inflammatory disease.

Unfortunately, the book is somewhat flawed in its lack of a uniform approach to the subject. The material often feels inaccessible and the chapters uneven in their execution, perhaps reflecting differences in the various authors' perceived audience. This is compounded by the book's lack of an integrating overview (the only introductory remarks are on the book's jacket) and its organization into loosely drawn divisions (eg, "Mitochondrial Biology," "Lung and Kidney," and "Organ Dysfunction: Detection and Intervention") without much framework for those unfamiliar with the topic. The chapters themselves range in their approaches to the stated topics.

Many chapters, such as the one by Losser et al, "Multiple Organ Failure and the Kidney," and the one by Kochanek and Clark, "Key Mechanisms of Secondary Neuronal Damage After Brain Trauma," achieve an admirable balance between nuts-and-bolts basic science and well organized integrative review. This approach allows access to the material and readily available "take home" messages for the uninitiated reader, while remaining interesting and informative to those already versed in the topic. Other chapters fail to live up to their titles, such as Lee and Downey's examination of the "Role of Leukocytes in Sepsis and Lung Injury," which, while fascinating reading, devotes 9 of its 11 pages to neutrophil elastase, leaving those unfamiliar with the fine points of neutrophil biology a bit in the dark.

Chapters of particular interest to those involved in the pulmonary aspects of critical care include excellent chapters on pulmonary vascular dysfunction (by Finney et al) and the influence of mechanical ventilation on organ dysfunction (by Whitehead and Slutsky). Matthay's chapter on pulmonary epithelial injury is also excellent, but too brief (4 pages) to really flesh out this very interesting subject. Other sections, such as those on mitochondrial biology and microcirculatory dysfunction, serve as good introductions to the issues of oxygen delivery and consumption, and, though a bit technical, may be very interesting to those involved in respiratory care.

Without exception the chapters are well-written and concise, though some are too brief. Most of the authors make an effort to clearly define their terminology, and there is less technical jargon than is typical of such a scientific volume. A use-

ful abbreviations list precedes the first chapter of the collection and is fairly extensive.

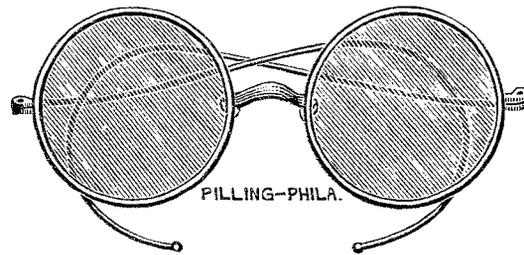
This soft-cover book is a handsome edition, printed on good stock, and, though it was a bit dog-eared after my efforts, it was still in good condition. There are remarkably few typographical errors for a medical/scientific book, and the illustrations (all black-and-white) range from adequate to truly excellent. The book is well referenced, clearly demonstrating the extensive knowledge of the various authors, and it frequently serves as a good step-

ping-off point for further reading of the literature. The book's index, however, is limited and makes some strange choices (for instance, listing "polymorphonuclear neutrophil" [sic] and "neutrophils" with completely different page references), which effectively closed a potential avenue of access to the material.

Ultimately, **Mechanisms of Organ Dysfunction in Critical Illness** is not for the casual reader. But for someone wishing a broad yet concise primer of cutting-edge science in the expansive field of critical care medicine it may be an excellent resource.

Others may wish to rely on journal review articles culled on a subject-by-subject basis. Hopefully the next edition will be updated and present a more consistent experience for the reader.

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