Antiemetic Therapy
ISBN 3-8055-7547-5

Although the treatment of nausea and vomiting has been the subject of a huge number of publications in the last decade, most of these papers have been published by a large variety of journals working in different specialties like oncology, anesthesiology, obstetric and radiation therapy that have in common patients presenting nausea and vomiting. Unfortunately, this results in each specialty pursuing its own agenda and few possibilities for the clinician and even researchers to really see the global picture. The objective of this effort by Donnerer and his collaborators is to give the readers such an overview of the physiology of nausea and vomiting and its pharmacologic treatment. This is accomplished first by a general review of the subject, followed by a series of chapters dedicated specifically to nausea and vomiting in the context of each specialty. The editor states that his first goal is to assist the clinician in making the right choice for every patient’s need. This objective is reached in the chapter by Kovac on postoperative nausea and vomiting (PONV). It is one of the best chapters of the book and summarizes extremely well the state of knowledge on this topic. For the researcher, the first chapters on the physiology and pharmacology can be very resourceful. For instance, the excellent chapter on motion sickness is an amazing source of information and sometimes almost reads like a good science fiction novel.

A minor drawback is the inevitable redundancy associated with a book with many contributors working on closely related topics. For instance, the chapter on metoclopramide in PONV, although scientifically very sound, could have been easily merged with the chapter on PONV specially since it concludes that metoclopramide does not work in PONV. In conclusion, the book is very useful for those with an interest on the topic and for the clinician or resident who wants to review the subject. It should be a part of any anesthesiology department library.

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Holding Court with the Ghost of Gilman Terrace: Selected Writings of Ralph Milton Waters
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A quarter of a century after his death, Ralph Waters (1883–1979) remains uniquely admired for his many contributions to the development of anesthesiology in North America. He was primus inter pares in a group that included such luminaries as James Tayloe Gwathmey, Arthur Guedel, Francis McMechan, and John Lundy in the United States, and Wesley Bourne and Harold Griffith in Canada. The first full professor of anesthesia, Waters was especially interested in education and training in anesthesiology, and established the first residency program. He was also responsible for many notable developments in practice: the to-and-fro system for the absorption of carbon dioxide; the introduction of cyclopropane (which, unhappily, Canada rejected) and of thiopental (doing so three months before Lundy used it for the first time); endobronchial intubation; and a punch-card system of record-keeping. All these, however, occurred in the first half of the 20th century, and, as progressively fewer anesthesiologists become aware of their significance, it is good to have a source of information about them made readily available.

This volume is an anthology. As such, it has the strengths and weaknesses of any anthology. Represented here are just a few of Waters’ numerous publications. Some of them concern topics on which he was an accepted authority and some reflect his sense of history, and all these will reward any anesthesiologist’s attention. They include papers on endotracheal intubation, carbon dioxide, hazards of anesthesia, professionalism, and the evolution of the specialty. However, infelicities of commission and omission weaken the book. Among the former, the organization of the papers is most misleading: in the sections on Biography and Autobiography, of a number of topics there is actually only one in each that concerns the life of an individual (Waters in the former and, strangely, Snow in the latter). Concerning the omissions, that concerning education is most evident,
for Waters’ interest in this surely merits a section on its own. These flaws might have been offset if an introduction had been provided; it would have been helpful, too, to those who are unfamiliar with Waters and what he did for the specialty. A small, but irritating, defect is the literal weakness of the copy I received; it came apart in my hands, though if this was due to the avidity with which I devoured the contents it might be considered an acceptable fault!

Despite these caveats, this volume has a place in the absence of a definitive biography of Waters. Until then, every department of anesthesiology might well consider acquiring this anthology in order to keep the memory of what Ralph Waters achieved from fading.

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