Complications of Regional Anesthesia

Second Edition
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Brendan T. Finucane, MB, BCh, BAO, FRCA, FRCPC
Professor, Department of Anesthesiology and Pain Medicine, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Editor

Springer
To
John Edward Steinhaus
Mentor and Friend
For some readers, the title of this book will immediately raise the question: Why construct a textbook that deals solely with complications? To answer this inquiry, we must refer to the maxim that each of us was taught on the very first day of our medical training: Primum non nocere. The discipline of regional anesthesia has seen a major expansion in the last 20 years as a result of better understanding of human anatomy and physiology, and the availability of sophisticated and reliable technology. More and more enthusiastic clinicians apply different regional techniques with great skill and the intention to provide satisfactory anesthesia and analgesia for more than merely the time of surgery. However, such accomplishments may be commended only if associated morbidity is minimized.

Dr. Brendan Finucane is both an accomplished clinician and able teacher who has devoted his career to the advancement of safe regional anesthesia. Who better than him to be charged with the task of assembling a group of fellow illustrious experts to dissect this subject? Regional anesthesia has a very safe record, as is shown in this book. Nevertheless, Dr. Finucane and his colleagues challenge our assurance of these laurels, reminding us that there is no space for complacency because any bad outcome can be disastrous for the patient, family, and medical community. In this book, every aspect of the practice has been scrutinized, with an emphasis on educating the reader to the potential risks associated with frequently performed techniques. I have no doubt that this collection will continue to be the major source not only for the anxious trainee, but also for the experienced and seasoned clinician, who will welcome the wealth of information it provides on every provision of regional anesthesia.

Francesco Carli, MD, MPhil, FRCA, FRCPC
Professor of Anesthesia
McGill University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada
In 1999, Churchill Livingstone published, what I thought was the first text on *Complications of Regional Anesthesia*. I was subsequently reminded by Daniel C. Moore that Charles C. Thomas published a book with an identical title in 1995. Dr. Moore generously forgave me for this oversight and provided me with a signed copy of his book which I will always treasure. By the time this edition is complete, eight years will have elapsed since my first edition, and there have been some interesting new developments in regional anesthesia in the intervening period.

What is new about this edition? The contents is expanded by approximately 20% and includes four new chapters along with updating of all the existing ones. The chapter on central neural blockade has been split into two separate chapters, *Complications Associated with Spinal Anesthesia* and *Complications of Epidural Anesthesia* and I have included a new chapter on prevention, *Avoiding Complication of Regional Anesthesia*. The final chapter is entitled *Medicolegal Aspects of Regional Anesthesia* and is quite a provocative treatise on this important topic. Once again I have made an effort to invite individuals from all over the world to be part of the volume, and my success in that goal is in part highlighted by the inclusion of a dedicated chapter, *International Morbidity Studies on Regional Anesthesia*. This section features the perspective of authors from Canada, the United States, Scandinavia, and France.

Reflecting our primary goal as clinicians, the most consistent theme throughout the book is prevention of complications (most of which can be anticipated) and ensuring the highest quality patient care. We, the authors of the chapters, have stressed the importance of proper patient selection, thorough preoperative evaluation, meticulous attention to sterile technique, and careful, deliberate handling of the needle. We emphasized the importance of knowing when to stop. We stressed the importance of patient comfort. The purpose of the exercise of regional anesthesia is defeated if, in the process of performing these techniques, the patient is injured.

In a book of this nature, repetition is difficult to avoid; however, in the process of editing this text I did my best to minimize duplication. Even when there was repetition, the various contributors stressed different aspects of the topics presented. The book is extensively referenced and quite inclusive and up to date. It is my hope that the text will be found extremely useful, and I always welcome the constructive feedback of my colleagues.

*Brendan T. Finucane, MB, BCh, BAO, FRCA, FRCP*  
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada  
April 2007
I would like to express my deep gratitude to all of the contributors to this text. I am impressed by the quality of the material presented and their willingness to abide by all of the rules imposed. I would like to thank Beth Campbell for her editorial assistance during earlier phases of this project and Stacy Hague and Barbara Chernow for their assistance during the final phase. I thank Patricia Crossley and Marilyn Blake for assisting me with this effort. I thank my illustrator Steve Wreakes for his timely response to my many requests to reproduce illustrations. Last, but not least, I thank my wife Donna who tolerated my solitude for many months as I toiled to complete this project.

Brendan T. Finucane, MB, BCh, BAO, FRCA, FRCP
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Giuditta Angelini, MD  
Assistant Professor, Department of Anesthesiology, University of Wisconsin Hospital, Madison, WI, USA

George Arndt, MD  
Professor, Department of Anesthesiology, University of Wisconsin Hospital, Madison, WI, USA

Yves Auroy, MD  
Professor of Anesthesia, Department of Anesthesia, Hôpital militaire Percy, Clamart, France

Dan Benhamou, MD  
Professor of Anesthesia, Department of Anesthesia, Hôpital de Bicêtre, Le Kremlin-Bicêtre, France

Stephan Blumenthal, MD  
Consultant, Department of Anesthesiology, Orthopedic University Hospital Balgrist, Zurich, Switzerland

Alain Borgeat, MD  
Professor and Chief of Staff, Department of Anesthesiology, Orthopedic University Hospital Balgrist, Zurich, Switzerland

Lynn M. Broadman, MD  
Professor Emeritus, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV, and Clinical Professor of Anesthesiology, Pittsburgh Children’s Hospital, Pittsburgh, PA, USA

David L. Brown, MD  
Edward Rotan Distinguished Professor and Chairman, Department of Anesthesiology and Pain Medicine, M. D. Anderson Cancer Center, Houston, TX, USA

Andrea Casati, MD  
Associate Professor of Anesthesiology, Department of Anesthesia and Pain Therapy, University of Parma, Parma, Italy
Dominic A. Cave, MB, BS, FRCPC
Assistant Clinical Professor, Department of Anesthesiology and Pain Medicine, University of Alberta Hospital, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Vincent W.S. Chan, MD, FRCPC
Professor, Department of Anesthesia, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Nils Dahlgren, MD, PhD
Associate Professor, Department of Anesthesia, Landskrona County Hospital, Landskrona, Sweden

Karen B. Domino, MD, MPh
Professor, Department of Anesthesiology and Neurological Surgery (adjunct), University of Washington, Seattle, WA, USA

Guido Fanelli, MD
Professor of Anesthesiology, Department of Anesthesia and Pain Therapy, University of Parma, Parma, Italy

F. Michael Ferrante, MD, FABPM
Director, UCLA Pain and Spine Care and Professor of Clinical Anesthesiology and Medicine, Department of Anesthesiology, David Geffen School of Medicine at University of California–Los Angeles, Santa Monica, CA, USA

Barry A. Finegan, MB, BCh, FRCPC
Professor and Chair, Department of Anesthesiology and Pain Medicine, University of Alberta Hospital, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Brendan T. Finucane, MB, BCh, BAO, FRCA, FRCPC
Professor, Department of Anesthesiology and Pain Medicine, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Steven J. Fowler, MB, ChB, Dip Obstet, FCARCSI
Vascular and Neuroanesthesia Fellow, Department of Anesthesia, Auckland City Hospital, University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand

Daniela Ghisi, MD
Anesthesia Fellow, Department of Anesthesia and Pain Therapy, University of Parma, Parma, Italy

Admir Hadžić, MD
Associate Professor of Anesthesia, Department of Anesthesiology, St. Luke’s–Roosevelt Hospital Center, Columbia University, New York, NY, USA

Robert C. (Roy) Hamilton, MB, BCh, FRCPC
Honorary Clinical Professor, Department of Anesthesiology, University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta, Canada

Lloyd Hendrix, MD
Department of Radiology, Medical College of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, WI, USA

Nirmala R. Abraham Hidalgo, MD
Clinical Instructor, Department of Anesthesiology and Assistant Director, UCLA Pain and Spine Care, David Geffen School of Medicine at University of California–Los Angeles, Santa Monica, CA, USA
Quinn H. Hogan, MD
Professor, Department of Anesthesiology, Medical College of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, WI, USA

Ryan A. Holt, MD
Chief Resident, Department of Anesthesiology, West Virginia University, Morgantown, WV, USA

Terese T. Horlocker, MD
Professor of Anesthesiology and Orthopedics, Department of Anesthesiology, Mayo Clinic College of Medicine, Rochester, MN, USA

Gabriella Iohom, FCARCSI, PhD
Cork University Hospital and National University of Ireland, Cork, Ireland

Safwan Jaradeh, MD
Department of Neurology, Medical College of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, WI, USA

Andrea Kattula, MB, BS, FANZCA
Anaesthesia Specialist, Department of Intensive Care and Department of Surgery, The Austin Hospital, Victoria, Australia

Lorri A. Lee, MD
Associate Professor, Departments of Anesthesiology and Neurological Surgery (adjunct), University of Washington, Seattle, WA, USA

John W.R. McIntyre, MD
Professor Emeritus (deceased), Department of Anesthesiology and Pain Medicine, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Paul J. O'Connor, MB, FFARCSI
Consultant Anesthetist, Department of Anesthesia, Letterkenny General Hospital, Letterkenny, County Donegal, Ireland

Philip W.H. Peng, MBBS, FRCPCH
Assistant Professor, Department of Anesthesia, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Narinder Rawal, MD, PhD
Professor, Department of Anesthesiology and Intensive Care, University Hospital, Örebro, Sweden

Per H. Rosenberg, MD, PhD
Professor of Anesthesiology, Department of Anesthesiology and Intensive Care Medicine, Helsinki University, Helsinki, Finland

Richard W. Rosenquist, MD
Professor of Anesthesia, Department of Anesthesia, and Director, Pain Medicine Division, University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA, USA

David J. Sage, MB, ChB, Dip Obstet, FANZCA
Clinical Associate, Professor of Anesthesiology, Department of Anesthesia, Auckland City Hospital, University of Auckland, New Zealand

1 Deceased.
Albert H. Santora, MD  
Anesthesiologist, Athens, GA, USA

George Shorten, FFARCSI, FRCA, MD, PhD  
Cork University Hospital and University College Cork, Cork, Ireland

Kari G. Smedstad, MB, ChB, FRCPC  
Professor Emerita, Department of Anesthesia, McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

Pekka Tarkkila, MD, PhD  
Associate Professor, Head, Department of Anaesthesia and Intensive Care, Helsinki University Central Hospital, Helsinki, Finland

Ban C.H. Tsui, MSc, MD, FRCPC  
Assistant Professor, Department of Anesthesiology and Pain Medicine, University of Alberta and Director of Clinical Research, University of Alberta Hospital and Stollery Children's Hospital, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Ciaran Twomey, MB, BCh, BAO (UNI), FCARCSI  
Clinical Fellow, Department of Anesthesiology and Pain Medicine, University of Alberta, University of Alberta Hospital, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

William F. Urmey, MD  
Clinical Associate Professor of Anesthesiology, Department of Anesthesiology, Weill Medical College of Cornell University, Hospital for Special Surgery, New York, NY, USA

Denise J. Wedel, MD  
Professor of Anesthesiology, Department of Anesthesiology, Mayo Clinic College of Medicine, Rochester, MN, USA