
Bonica's Management of Pain, third edition, is a comprehensive text dealing with all aspects of pain management. The editors successfully recruited an impressive list of contributing authors. A total of 132 experts in the field of pain management participated in this text.

The book is divided into 5 parts: (1) Basic Considerations of Pain, (2) Evaluation of the Pain Patient, (3) Generalized Pain Syndromes, (4) Regional Pain, and (5) Methods of Symptomatic Control. Each part of the text offers detailed information, providing an exceptional compilation of topics dealing with effective pain management.

In Part I, Basic Considerations of Pain, the authors cover such issues as the history of pain concepts and theories, and the anatomy, physiology, and psychology of pain. Differences between acute and chronic pain and their management are clearly defined and explained. An interesting chapter on multidisciplinary pain programs gives adequate information about the structure of effective pain management programs.

Part II, The Evaluation of the Pain Patient, offers a great deal of insight into the successful and thorough evaluation of these complex patients. Important aspects of this chapter include the detail given to the assessment of pain with various instruments being described. The medical evaluation, electrodiagnostic, imaging, psychological/psychosocial, and functional/disability evaluation parameters are included.

Much of the most difficult content is found in Part III, Generalized Pain Syndromes. In this section, neuropathic, vascular, cutaneous, musculoskeletal, malignant, and acute pain are described. The authors have uniformly done a very good job of detailing each topic, with clear graphics to assist the reader. Attention also is given to pain management for the young and elderly, topics that are often covered in a limited manner.

In Part IV, Regional Pain, the pain attributed to various locations in the body is defined. One of the most meaningful sections deals with the differential diagnosis and understanding of pain associated with the chest. Clear information related to cardiac, respiratory, and esophageal pain is offered. In addition, the topic of chest pain that is related to or caused by cancer and other disorders is well developed. Each topic area, including the head, neck, shoulders, arm, abdomen, pelvis, back, hip, and lower extremities, is clearly and definitively addressed.

The final part of the text, interestingly titled Methods of Symptomatic Control, provides an inclusive collection of topics related to management. It is important to note that this is not just another pharmacology text. The book clearly provides pharmacology information but goes beyond in terms of management to include psychological, physical therapeutic modalities, implanted electric stimulators, regional anesthesia/analgesia, and neurosurgical options.

Current clinical research is included throughout virtually every chapter, as would be expected. However, Part V also includes a chapter on clinical trials that provides insight into the extensive needs of pain researchers.

Finally, the editors' look into the future of pain management provides a fascinating exploration of the expected needs of society and what resources will be required to manage patients in pain.

Throughout the text, excellent pictures, diagrams, tables, and figures add to the understanding of the reader. Difficult concepts are depicted in various ways in order to facilitate understanding. Many of these graphics will enhance the teaching of such difficult concepts as pain transmission and the action of adjuvant agents.

For Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs) practicing in the area of pain management, this is an excellent text. The cost, although high, is offset by the importance of the material and the exceptional depth found in this text. Nurse anesthetists may find the fact that CRNAs are not mentioned to any significant degree in the area of pain management to be problematic. However, given that nurse anesthetists are relatively new entrants to the field, we might expect greater inclusion in future editions.

Use of this text in a nurse anesthesia program may be limited due to the cost. Further, few beginning students in the specialty would be required to devote such time and resources to the study of pain at this level.

This is an excellent text for the comprehensive study of pain. It should not be confused with a beginning text and should be introduced later in a program of study or used by experienced CRNAs who wish to develop a deeper understanding of pain management. This is a significant contribution to the pain management literature.

Margaret Faut-Callahan CRNA, DNSc, FAAN
Professor and Chair, Department of Adult Health Nursing
Director, Nurse Anesthesia Program, Rush University, College of Nursing
Chicago, Illinois

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