Basic principles of Intensive Care medicine for junior physicians

PTPW Burgers

Department of Surgery, Antoni van Leeuwenhoek Hospital, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Edited by B McLean and JL Zimmerman.
349 p. Fig., Tables.
Society of Critical Care Medicine, 2007.
Price: $77.00

The 4th edition of ‘Fundamental Critical Care Support’, with contributions by 46 experts, is the textbook for the FCCS Course in the Netherlands. This course, which concludes with an examination, is primarily designed for junior physicians (ANIOS), to learn about the basic principles of Intensive Care medicine. In addition, residents in internal medicine, emergency medicine and surgery are also eligible to follow this course. The FCCS course book is a good preparation for this course, and it functions as an excellent reference book.

The book consists of two parts. Part One contains sixteen chapters dealing with the essential principles of diagnostic procedures and management of intensive care-related pathology. The main subjects are airway pathology and management, treatment of cardiovascular disease, cardiopulmonary and cerebral resuscitation, and the diagnosis and treatment of shock and life-threatening infections. Additional chapters deal with the recognition and assessment of seriously ill patients, treatment on the ICU of neurological emergencies, intensive care during pregnancy and basic principles of care of children on the ICU. The chapter ‘Special Considerations’ describes some specific clinical pictures and one chapter is devoted to ethics on the intensive care unit.

Every chapter starts off with a short summary of outlines which will be taken into consideration. This is followed by a case study which is the contextual basis for further discussion. The texts are formulated clearly and classification of chapters is well-organized. Important remarks are mentioned in separate text boxes. Every chapter ends with a list of ‘key points’, followed by ‘suggested reading’ of both literature and online publications.

Part Two contains seventeen appendices, in which indications, contra-indications and step by step actions are described for clinical procedures that are frequently performed on an ICU. Examples are the insertion of a central venous catheter, endotracheal intubation, performing a thoracostomy and cardioversion. Pictures, tables and flow-charts illustrate the text.

The book is designed in an American style with tables, clear enumerations and accents in separate text boxes. This set up makes the book clearly structured and very accessible to the reader.

A disadvantage is the descriptions of the American medication strategies and dosage (especially antibiotics) that sometimes vary greatly from Dutch guidelines. The use of the index is somewhat hampered by the many pages that are referred to after each keyword.

In conclusion, this textbook and the associated Dutch Fundamental Critical Care Support course form a stable basis for all physicians for whom the ICU is a new work area.