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REVIEWS OF EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL

Before the Scalpel: What Everyone Should Know about Anesthesia. By Panchali Dhar, M.D. New Haven, Tell Me Press, 2009. Pages: 201. Price: \$19.95.

In a world saturated with movies like *Awake*, numerous television shows that portray anesthesiologists in a negative light, and an unlimited amount of unfiltered information available online, people become more fearful than ever of having surgery. For a small but important group of people who are scheduled to undergo surgical procedures and anesthetics, concerns about their upcoming experiences can be terrifying. There also are people who just want to be better informed about the anesthesia portion of their surgical experiences to make them well-informed consumers and ultimately to empower them in their medical decision-making processes. Completely giving up control of body and mind and putting trust in the hands of often unknown anesthesiologists can be difficult. Providing prospective patients with a useful and simple tool to ease their concerns and fears would be a great achievement.

This is exactly what this book has managed to accomplish. It provides useful and detailed information about anesthesiology as a field of medicine and the role that anesthesiologists play in the perioperative period. The author has created an excellent sourcebook for the average person. In it, she addresses many common fears and concerns about our specialty.

The book is divided into four parts. First, a reader gets to meet the anesthesia team and learn about different types of anesthesia, as well as when and why a certain type is preferred over another. The second section deals with the entire perioperative experience from prep to recovery. Readers find out why they are told to stop certain medications and about NPO guidelines, and the rationale behind them. They find out what to expect inside the operating room and about routine and special monitors that may be used. Readers also find out what the recovery room is all about and what to expect there. The third section addresses a variety of special topics, from cosmetic surgery and labor anesthesia to dealing with postoperative nausea and vomiting and issues with awareness under anesthesia. The book finishes with a history of our profession and a complete and detailed glossary of terms used in the book.

It is important for a book like this to be easy to read and not to contain too much medical jargon. The author accomplishes this masterfully. I would highly recommend this book to anyone who has any questions or concerns about most anesthesia-related topics. With the information provided in this relatively short and easy-to-read book that costs less than \$20, patients can become more active participants in their own medical decision-making processes. It gives them a weapon to deal with their fears, concerns, and questions. Better informed and less fearful people make better patients.

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