



BOOKS, ETC.

Pain Review, by Steven D. Waldman, MD, JD. 780 pages, \$79.95. Philadelphia, PA: Saunders Elsevier, 2009. ISBN: 978-1-4160-5893-9.

Dr Waldman is a noted authority in the multidisciplinary field of pain management. When this text was created, his goals were to develop a reference that contained all of the materials needed to review the specialty of pain management and organize the material in a small, concise, and easy to read book.

The text contains 9 sections and 355 chapters. The sections include anatomy, neuroanatomy, painful conditions, diagnostic testing, nerve blocks and advanced interventional pain management techniques, physical and behavioral modalities, pharmacology, special patient populations, and ethical and legal issues in pain management. At the end of every chapter there is a suggested reading reference.

The student of pain management also will find 767 review questions and answers in the text. Each answer is referenced to a page number in the text for the reader to review. When you purchase the printed text version of *Pain Review*, you will have access to expertconsult.com, which is the online edition of the text. The text is an outstanding resource for students of regional anesthesia and pain management, and it is a clear and concise reference for the routine as well as the unusual pain management case.

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The Invention of Air: A Story of Science, Faith, Revolution, and the Birth of America, by Steven Johnson. 230 pages, \$25.95.

New York, NY: Riverhead Books, 2008. ISBN: 978-1-59448-852-8.

In 1771, the English chemist and freethinker Joseph Priestly observed that a candle beneath a glass jar burns out and a mouse quickly dies; but a sprig of mint will thrive. To Priestly the significance of his discovery was not at first clear, but his friend and colleague Benjamin Franklin correctly guessed that it would “open a new field of knowledge.” We now believe that with this observation, Priestly “discovered” oxygen. Priestly, who is elsewhere credited with the discovery of nitrous oxide, joined the long list of scientists (Europeans: Scheele, Black, Lavoisier, Boyle, Davy, Hill-Hunt; and Americans: Wells, Morton, Long, and Jackson) whose work led to the discovery of anesthesia. *The Invention of Air*: is a biography of Joseph Priestly and his influence on the world. It is a most interesting book.

The central theme of “the discovery of air” is that progress in knowledge (particularly science, religion, and politics during the 18th century) relies on the combined efforts of many people with different areas of expertise. Discoveries are often made simultaneously by different investigators and owe more to the current paradigm or spirit of the time than to the work of one individual. As a chemist examining the world around him, Priestly shared ideas weekly in conversations he held with other prominent freethinkers in a London coffee house. As a result, Priestly’s knowledge expanded and evolved well beyond chemistry. He was a Unitarian minister who endured persecution for dissenting from the (trinitarian) Church of England. He wrote political pamphlets supporting the American

colonies until rioters burned his home outside Birmingham. Fleeing to Pennsylvania, Priestly began corresponding with John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. Through that 10-year correspondence he played an important role in the philosophical changes, such as independence from Britain and the separation of church and state, which framed the American revolutionary period. Priestly’s impact was great enough that author Steven Johnson believes we should regard him as one of America’s Founding Fathers.

Joseph Priestly’s influence on the discovery of anesthesia was indirect but important. The earliest anesthetics were given in room air, so oxygen did not matter; however, pneumatics, Priestly’s chosen field, enabled the discovery of nitrous oxide. Self-experimentation with nitrous oxide and diethyl ether by subsequent investigators led to the idea that there is continuity between intoxication, sleep, and the reversible suspension of animation that we now call anesthesia. Joseph Priestly’s “foundational insights” about mint in a vacuum and his great and varied learning placed him in the middle of it all.

Nurse anesthetists who wish to understand the philosophical antecedents to their discipline will like this book. Steven Johnson, who has written 5 books and contributes to the online magazine *Slate*, is an accurate historian and a good storyteller. His writing is scholarly and yet fresh. I, for one, am ready to accept that Joseph Priestly deserves to be ranked no more than one rung below our other Founding Fathers.

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