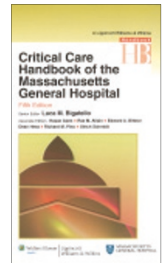


## BOOK REPORT

# *Critical Care Handbook of the Massachusetts General Hospital*

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Luca M. Bigatello (Ed.): *Critical Care Handbook of the Massachusetts General Hospital*. 5th edition. Philadelphia, PA: Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, 2010, 728 pp., ISBN 978-0-7817-9566-1



I am not really a fan of medical books in general. I usually find them outdated and boring. The speed of scientific advances and of dissemination of knowledge via modern electronic communication tools does not fit into the traditional process for a book. Not rarely, information delivered in medical textbooks is contradicted by the continuous release of new data. Likewise, the endless gain in scientific knowledge is incompatible with the classical book format. Textbooks then either focused on too highly specific topics or poorly summarised the current medical knowledge. So when I was invited to review this handbook I thought it would be a painful experience. I started reading the book just after boarding a Paris to Los Angeles flight. I could not stop reading it, and when I turned off the seat light we were landing in Los Angeles. Let me tell you why Luca Bigatello and colleagues' handbook renewed my appetite for this type of medical literature.

First, it really is a handbook – the size is perfect, the weight is perfect and you can carry it wherever you go. The flexible cover is very practical and makes it easy to handle at the patient's bedside. When one opens the book, the first sentence on the third cover page – 'to our patients' – makes it clear that the authors' primary and ultimate goal is to improve the quality of care for the critically ill. This book is thus intended for trainees as well as for established intensive care unit physicians. Amazingly when reading it I realised that we will always be trainees.

In 44 chapters, the editors cover the essentials of critical care medicine. Bigatello has gathered a panel of

co-editors with expertise in different areas, thereby ensuring accuracy while dealing with a broad spectrum of critical illnesses. The first part of the book provides the readers with an accurate and concise appraisal of the basic principles of human physiology on which the whole critical care approach is based. Beyond physiological considerations, the readers will find evidence-based management strategies for the most common critical illnesses and for more specific problems such as obstetrical care or morbid obesity. Finally, the editors have included in this fifth edition a chapter on the role of intensive care unit physicians beyond the intensive care unit.

Key points are underlined in bold characters and are further clarified in straightforward illustrations. Then, in the twinkling of an eye, the reader finds what he/she needs to know. In addition, a selection of references guides the readers who want to know more about a specific topic. My only criticism of this book is that a number of illustrations, particularly the photographs, deserve to be in colour.

### Competing interests

The author declares that he has no competing interests.

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