Cardiac anaesthesia brings many divergent disciplines into one unifying practice, making it one of the most complex anaesthetic subspecialties. It requires an understanding of pathology, physiology, pharmacology, internal medicine, cardiology, cardiac surgery and intensive care. The ever-expanding nature of the specialty presents considerable challenges for both the everyday practitioner and the trainee – for whom this text is particularly targeted.

In this day and age, when a vast amount of information is already available both in print and on-line, one may be forgiven for questioning the need for yet another printed textbook. By way of an answer, the Editors (both of whom have worked in the UK and the USA) have produced a textbook (rather than a *cookbook*) that addresses a relatively unfulfilled need – a source that is specifically directed towards those who represent the future of our specialty. By incorporating contributions from authors from many countries, the Editors have largely avoided national and institutional bias.

Today’s anaesthetic trainees are confronted with the seemingly impossible task of assimilating, understanding and memorizing an almost infinite body of information. Those who succeed in this task are invariably those who can confidently identify core principles without getting distracted by minute details. The Editors never intended to produce an exhaustive reference and the need to consult other sources of detailed information has, therefore, not been completely eliminated. This book does, however, provide the trainee with a very convenient framework onto which further knowledge can be added as it is acquired. The manner in which the authors have organized and presented information in this book should help the reader to more quickly see the “bigger picture” and appreciate the subtleties of cardiac anaesthesia.

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