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**C. Henssge, B. Knight, T. Krompecher, B. Madea, L. Nokes:
The estimation of the time since death in the early postmortem period
Arnold, London, 2002, 2nd edn, 271 pp (ISBN 0-340-71960-5)**

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The estimation of the time of death belongs to the original, important and most difficult tasks in legal medicine. In crime cases it is often necessary to restrict the time of death in an early period in order to give information to the police which is necessary for effective work. Later in court, the estimation of the time of death can be the only piece of evidence for or against the guilt of an accused defendant.

In this book some of the most experienced specialists summarize the results of their scientific work as well as their practical experience. Compared to the first edition which was published 7 years ago, the text has been completely rewritten and some additions have been made considering e.g. the value of gastric contents and new results obtained especially in the years after the first edition by Henssge and Madea.

The book gives an overview of the historical and present development in the field. The temperature-based methods are described in great detail with all the natural science basic principles as well as the changes of the eyes, muscles, tissues and a high number of biochemical parameters more or less suitable for the estimation of the time of death. Furthermore a guideline for practical casework is included based on the so-called integrative method. All the results of scientific investigations are discussed using examples from casework. Last but not least, the limitations of each of the techniques are illustrated with regards to the relevant literature as well as the statistical value which can reduce the application of some methods in practical work and its evidential value for the courts.

In summary the book gives excellent information on all the relevant data and problems in relation to the estimation of the time of death and can be used as guide for practical casework. It can be recommended without any limitations for specialists in legal medicine and all others involved in the investigation of serious crime cases.

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