

Bobbi Jo O'Neal: Investigating infant deaths

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T. Bajanowski

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The investigation of infant deaths is complex and complicated, and it requires special knowledge from different fields of medicine, psychology, and criminology. Therefore, in some countries, the investigation of sudden and unexpected infant deaths as well as unnatural deaths is an interdisciplinary task performed by specially trained police officers, forensic specialists, paediatric pathologists, paediatricians and other health professionals. One main aim of this investigation is to determine the cause of natural deaths, the cause and manner of unnatural deaths (homicide or accidental), and to investigate deaths from undetermined causes as best as possible. In each part of this investigation, special procedures/(standardised) protocols are used, which are sometimes different from country to country.

In this book, B. O'Neal, a registered nurse and board certified medicolegal death investigator with the American Board of Medicolegal Death Investigators, gives an extensive overview on the investigation of infant deaths including epidemiological background, the significance of the emergency helpers, the initial post-mortem external assessment,

the death scene investigation, the parental interview, the forensic autopsy, the analysis of the medical history, the case conference and the family or caregiver follow-up.

The book shows that the author has an extended knowledge in this field and, moreover, a long-standing experience in doing such investigations. The book integrates different resources, refers the situation in the US, and reflects the relevant literature in this field. It is an excellent guideline for performing death investigations in infants. Besides the general overview, a number of special problems/tasks are discussed in great detail and always from a practical point of view. However, good experiences from outside the US, for example from projects in Australia or Norway, are not referred.

In summary, the book gives an excellent overview on all the relevant questions and problems in relation to the investigation of infant deaths and can be used as guideline for practical casework. It can be recommended without any limitation for specialists in legal medicine and specialists from other fields involved in the investigation of these deaths.

T. Bajanowski (✉)
Institute of Legal Medicine, University of Duisburg-Essen,
Hufelandstraße 55,
45122 Essen, Germany
e-mail: thomas.bajanowski@uk-essen.de