

BOOK REVIEW

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A Review of "Medical-Legal Investigation of Traffic Accidents"

REFERENCE: Duerwald, W., *Medical-Legal Investigation of Traffic Accidents*, VEB Georg Thieme, Leipzig, DDR, 1966, 560 pages, 35 MDN

The forensic pathologist can, no doubt, contribute immensely to the reconstruction of a fatal motor vehicle accident by carefully evaluating the victim's injuries. This aspect is commonly overlooked. In most cases, autopsy reports of highway fatalities fail to correlate injuries with known mechanisms and merely list the injuries and establish the cause of death.

A factor which has significantly contributed to this deficiency is the absence of adequate literature in this field of traffic accident pathology. This has led to a lack of understanding of what a pathologist's report can and will do if adequate observations were made and has, with time, caused general apathy on the part of law enforcement personnel, attorneys, and judges with respect to expert medical testimony in courts of law handling traffic deaths.

Medical-Legal Investigation of Traffic Accidents is no pioneer in the area of highway accident study, but it assembles data previously observed to a single, easily attainable source of reference. The authors of this book are all familiar names of experienced individuals who have been working for years with problems related to motor vehicular crashes. A glance at some of the chapters indicates names as Prokop, Gohler, Holzhausen, and Müller, to mention only a few.

The importance of drugs, carbon monoxide, alcohol, and diseases as causes of traffic accidents is discussed. The post mortem examination of the traffic accident victim, reconstruction of the accident scene, and ways and means of prevention are other topics under detailed consideration. One hundred-forty-four photographs and diagrams help to enlighten the reader.

The book, undoubtedly, fills a great void in the medical-legal literature. Its only short-coming for an American readership is that it is in German. It must be read to be appreciated.

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