

## BOOK REVIEW

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### A Review of *Gradwohl's Legal Medicine*

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**REFERENCE:** Camps, Francis E., Ed., *Gradwohl's Legal Medicine*, 3rd ed., Yearbook Medical Publishers, Chicago, Ill., 1976, 717 pages.

Until an auto becomes a safety or financial hazard, most people are reluctant to trade for a new model unless the change offers significant differences and benefits. A review of *Gradwohl's Legal Medicine* similarly must address two questions: (1) the value of the original and (2) the merits of purchasing the new third edition.

*Gradwohl* is a basic text for any reasonably complete medical/legal library since it contains well-written discussions of multiple, widely diverse areas of legal medicine. These chapters not only constitute valuable reference sources but also include extensive bibliographies. Few texts cover the breadth of material of this volume, from the history of legal medicine to tissue matching in organ transplant patients to epiphyseal closure charts and discussions of psychiatric diagnoses of criminally deranged folk. It also contains sections that are ideal required reading for forensic pathology residents, as well as for students in an advanced medical school course in legal medicine or forensic pathology. Criminalists, lawyers, generalists, forensic anthropologists, and dentists alike will find valuable cross-referenced data precisely outlined. Any office or hospital library containing *Gradwohl* has an abundance of detailed information available to the inquiring professional.

Acquisition of the third edition should not correlate with disposal of the second, most of which remains valuable and pertinent. Probably 80 to 85% of the third edition has been directly taken from Dr. Camp's second revision of *Gradwohl's* original text. I'll not detail the many new changes but summarize them as alterations in both arrangement and emphasis, rendering the bibliographies current and inserting topics more appropriate to our time. Particularly notable and valuable to many people is a new section on bombing and explosion injuries.

Of importance in considering the book's future is the question of when does a single gifted and dedicated author's work become merely a publication by committee? This text badly needs a stern, heavy-handed editor, dedicated to reducing it to a smaller compendium with valuable unity. Most authorities write as if narrowly committed to their own subject. Several seem overly dedicated to their particular speciality—I question the value of a lengthy discussion on the neuropathology of cerebral hypoxia in this general work. Highest priority in a new text should be given to complete and critical examination of the text's illustrations and photographs. The value of a color photograph of a metastatic ependymoma of the right atrium and a photograph of an "isolated injury to the liver" showing a torn and bloody organ should be strongly questioned.

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Anyone familiar with the text realizes that its primary direction is toward the legal system within the United Kingdom. While this adds many pages of little interest to the American reader, the authors do cover the systems within the United States decently and fairly.

The reviewer believes that a copy of either *Gradwohl's* second or third edition properly belongs in every hospital and forensic science laboratory. In this case, newer does seem better, certainly in some areas. One hopes, however, that a tightly trimmed and unified model is being planned now.