

BOOK REVIEW

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A Review of *Forensic Medicine*

REFERENCE: Tedeschi, C. G., Eckert, W. G., and Tedeschi, L. G., Eds., *Forensic Medicine*, W. B. Saunders, Philadelphia, 1977, 1680 pages, \$110.00.

Forensic Medicine is an encyclopedic work addressed to all who are interested and involved in medicolegal matters. This book differs significantly from other books in forensic medicine and pathology in that much of it is devoted to the examination, evaluation, and treatment of the living person, injured in either the medical or legal sense, rather than primarily to postmortem studies.

The 91 contributors to *Forensic Medicine* include physicians in a variety of specialties, a dentist, attorneys, criminologists, and environmental scientists from both the United States and abroad. The individual chapters vary greatly in both length and depth of coverage of subject. Almost all have good references, which range from antiquity to works published in 1977. Some chapters could serve as texts in themselves; the section of Chapter 3 on injuries of the musculoskeletal system is 102 pages long with 336 references, while the detailed Chapter 71, "Poisonous and Injurious Higher Plants and Fungi," is 112 pages long with 509 references.

Particularly welcome to the forensic pathologist are chapters treating of subjects not thoroughly covered in previous texts and subjects about which one can gain meaningful information and familiarity only after a painstaking search of the literature. These subjects include "Timing of the Wound," "Trauma and Pregnancy," "The Law of Prenatal and Perinatal Injuries," "Sarcosaprophagous Insects as Forensic Indicators," and "Post-mortem Injury."

Chapter 3, concerning wounds of different organ systems, has wide clinical applications. Particularly important is this statement: "Maintenance of an exact record is one of the most important obligations of the physician to the victim of an injury." Chapter 11, "Firearm Injuries," is a good, concise presentation of this subject, emphasizes the incalculable value of experience in evaluating cases of gunshot wounds, and urges frequent consultation with the ballistics expert. The chapter on organ transplantation presents several thought-provoking solutions to the continuing shortage of cadaver transplant organs. Part IV, "General Legal Theories," provides useful background material in the complex problems of negligence, malpractice, and product liability. The work appropriately concludes with an instructive chapter by the late Dr. Milton Helpert on the

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responsibility of the pathologist in cases involving workmen's compensation claims. He and, in an earlier chapter, Dr. C. G. Tedeschi emphasize the importance of performing a complete autopsy in each case rather than accepting the first potentially lethal condition found as "the cause of death."

As is inevitable in a book of any size, there are a number of statements with which the reviewer must take issue. These include (p. 1026) "A toxicologic examination should . . . be undertaken in all sudden infant death cases" (see, in particular, J. E. Smialek and J. R. Monforte, "Toxicology and Sudden Infant Death," *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, Vol. 22, No. 4, Oct. 1977, pp. 757-762); the statement (p. 203) that in traumatic asphyxia, "death . . . is most likely secondary to cerebral edema" (rather, most likely secondary to associated blunt force injuries); and, (p. 1103) "The elapsed time since death is readily determined by the pathologist within a period of days or even weeks." (Oh, that it were!)

The book is printed on good quality paper. In the copy reviewed there were numerous faint ink impressions of words below true lines of print, and occasional misspings, but few misspellings. The legends of Figures 3-1-13 and 3-1-14 are transposed. Photographs are generally of good quality and drawings of high quality, though a number of gross photographs and dental X-rays in Chapter 3 have poor resolution. Disturbing to the pathologist will be the fact that photomicrographs in some chapters lack notation of magnification and identity of stains.

The main virtues of *Forensic Medicine* are first, that it will serve as a convenient, though somewhat cumbersome, source of knowledge on virtually all conceivable medico-legal subjects. Second, in, with, and in addition to discussions of forensic pathology, it contains much valuable background and source material on legal medicine, with many illustrative cases in both forensic pathology and civil litigation. The work is perhaps too all-inclusive, for subjects such as fungal and mycobacterial infections, parasitic diseases, and the pathophysiology of high altitudes are of relatively limited forensic interest and are covered thoroughly and well in standard texts. Even some of the topics in forensic pathology are somewhat better treated in other recent forensic pathology texts.

Thus, the purchase of *Forensic Medicine* is recommended only to the serious student or practitioner of the forensic sciences. For others, in view of the diversity and complexity of the subject matter and the cost of the book (about \$110.00), *Forensic Medicine* will serve admirably as a library or laboratory reference work.