

BOOK REVIEW

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A Review of Toxicological and Pathological Studies on Psychoactive Drug Involved Deaths

REFERENCE: Gottschalk, L. A., and Cravey, R. H., *Toxicological and Pathological Studies on Psychoactive Drug Involved Deaths*, Biomedical Publications, Davis, CA, 1980, 472 pages.

This book presents detailed summaries of pertinent information regarding 3004 deaths collected from nine metropolitan areas in the United States all involving psychoactive drugs. Toxicologists fundamentally are confronted with interpreting the results of analytical determinations and ascertaining the range of concentrations of psychoactive drugs in biological fluids and tissues that are associated with death. By presenting data such as drug concentrations, methodology, role of drug in death, route of administration, autopsy findings, and cause of death as well as other information in a uniform manner, the authors have presented the scientific community with a valuable registry. Too infrequently is a compilation of data presented in the literature that permits independent study and allows the toxicologist to derive his own conclusions.

It is unfortunate that this study was not published until more than five years after its completion. During a time of rapidly improving methodology for the quantitative determination of drugs many changes have occurred. As indicated by the authors, this study illustrates as well the variations seen in the manner and method of interpretation of the toxicological results by coroners and medical examiners. Nonetheless, the compilation is a step in the right direction in the field of "interpretative toxicology" which still enjoys its infancy.

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