

BOOK REVIEW

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A Review of Closed Head Injury, Its Pathology and Legal Medicine

REFERENCE: Crompton, R., *Closed Head Injury, Its Pathology and Legal Medicine*, Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd., London, 1985, 93 pp.

Beware of a book with a disclaimer in its preface!

In the preface, Dr. Crompton has written that this book is based largely on his own experience and "researches." Next comes the dreaded disclaimer. "It is not a scholarly review of the known facts about closed head injury." Later in the preface, the author makes a revealing explanation for the exclusion of penetrating head injuries from the book. He states that penetrating injuries "result in localized dissipation of energy with localized brain injury, whereas non-penetrating closed injuries result in generalized dissipation of energy with generalized brain injury. This tends to result in greater disability and is certainly of greater scientific and medico-legal interest." Such dismissal of penetrating brain trauma leads me to conclude that Dr. Crompton has not examined many brains with gunshot injuries or that he has not thought carefully about those that he has examined, or both of the foregoing. In fact, gunshot wounds of the brain routinely: (1) cause structural changes and functional derangements in areas far distant from the wound track, (2) produce lesions that unequivocally and instructively mark the movements of the brain within the skull, and (3) serve as the equivalent of definitive, illuminating natural experiments that exemplify principles of brain wounding that are equally applicable to closed head injuries.

The book contains fourteen chapters, none of which adequately covers its subject matter. The entire text is incredibly truncated. For example, in the first chapter (Anatomical and Functional Considerations), a section entitled "The Functioning of the Brain" occupies slightly less than one half page of text. Chapter 2, Cerebral Herniation, contains one and one third pages of text and a photograph; herniation of the cerebellar tonsils is not mentioned in this chapter or elsewhere in the book. A chapter on skull fractures contains less than four pages of written text. One of the figures in the chapter on fractures shows a transverse basilar hinge running anterior to the petrous temporal ridges and through the pituitary fossa. The legend and text indicate that the fracture is an autopsy artifact, but Dr. Crompton's text does not explain how to distinguish between such autopsy artifacts and their common and important traumatic counterparts.

The chapter on Dural Hemorrhage contains confusing, and in my opinion, incorrect infor-

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mation about three important subjects: dating or aging of subdural hemorrhages, traumatic rupture of berry aneurysms, and traumatic subarachnoid hemorrhages. Chapters devoted to Traumatic Intracerebral Hemorrhage and to Cerebral Infarction deal in a superficial fashion with important issues that are controversial. The subject of Cerebral Contusion and Laceration is dealt with in a four-page chapter containing two photographs and a diagram. This chapter fails to make adequate distinction between coup and contrecoup contusions, and hardly distinguishes between patterns of brain injury resulting from falls and blows. A chapter on Diffuse Shearing Lesions (diffuse axonal injury) consists of one and one third pages of text and three photographs. The chapter on Head Injuries in Children fails to mention or describe the morphology of brain injuries in infants or to acknowledge that such injuries in infants are different than their counterparts in children or adults.

The book contains no literature citations in its chapters. A single page entitled "relevant reading, neurological sciences" at the end of the book lists fifteen publications, six of which are texts. Many of the photographs are either out of focus or have a distracting, cluttered background.

I read this 93-page book from cover to cover. If I attempted to list and explain adequately every difference of opinion that pricked me in the reading, this critique would be longer than Dr. Crompton's book.

In conclusion, I regret that I must agree with Dr. Crompton's disclaimer in the preface; this book is neither comprehensive nor scholarly.