

BOOK REVIEW

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A Review of *Forensic Medicine*

REFERENCE: Simpson, K. and Knight, B., *Forensic Medicine*, Edward Arnold, 300 North Charles St., Baltimore, MD 21201, 1985, 348 pp.

This text, first published in 1947, and now in its ninth edition, is intended to serve as a "guide to the study and practice of forensic medicine." The information presented, heavily slanted toward the British experience, is divided into two sections, Forensic Medicine and Toxicology. The former, representing two thirds of the book, includes topics of forensic pathology such as changes after death, firearm wounds, and asphyxia, but also topics such as medical ethics and medicolegal aspects of insanity. The second part of the book, Toxicology, describes the various poisons, divided into eight subgroups, and the laws regulating the sale of drugs and poisons in the United Kingdom.

The emphasis on the clinical aspects of the topics, such as treatment of poisoning, as well as emphasis on British law diminish the utility of the book for a U.S. medical examiner or general pathologist with occasional forensic science responsibilities. Additionally, devoting 16 pages to describing gunshot wounds and 15 pages to describing irritant poisons does not reflect the U.S. case load.

More fundamental defects include too brief discussions of mechanism of injury and photographs of wounds obscured by blood or of inadequate magnification. References to the periodic literature are essentially absent. A significant gap is a lack of discussion on the evaluation of motor vehicle related injuries.

The book does benefit from the presentation of numerous case examples and several excellent summary tables such as one describing the response of mucous membranes to a variety of poisons.

Although the British medical student would likely find much of this book useful, the U.S. medical student or budding forensic pathologist would likely find more than a few chapters of little interest. The veteran in the field might have this book on the shelf, but would consult it rarely.

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