

BOOK REVIEW

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A Review of Forensic Pathology

REFERENCE: Di Maio, D. J. and Di Maio, V. J. M., *Forensic Pathology*, Elsevier Science Publishing Co., Inc., 655 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10010, 1989, 503 pp.

Ever since being enticed into the field of forensic pathology some 15 years ago, I have awaited the publication of a concise, definitive text in the field which would encompass the numerous and varied aspects of potential cases sure to be encountered in the routine workday of a practicing forensic pathologist. Up until now, I had to be content with the sparse number of texts in the field, most of which were outdated, too cumbersome to carry, and filled with oversized photographs but very little text. With the publication of *Forensic Pathology*, the field of death investigation has finally been given a reference that encompasses a broad range of subjects, in a manner sure to instruct those individuals less familiar with scientific terminology, while at the same time acting as a reference for all pathologists, whether they are performing forensic investigation on a daily basis or only a few times a year.

Forensic Pathology is written by the father and son team of Dominick J. Di Maio and Vincent J. M. Di Maio, who together bring to the text over 60 years of personal experience in the field. The photos provided, which serve as excellent examples of the text, are taken from extensive personal collections, which also encompass years of daily work in the field. The book has achieved a well-balanced combination of pictures and text, a feat that is often difficult to achieve in references of this kind. The subject matter covered is broad out of necessity, but the authors have succeeded in presenting the information in a concise, yet comprehensive, fashion. Chapters include valuable, timely information on medicolegal investigative systems in general and pertinent information on the determination of the time of death, deaths due to natural disease, blunt trauma injury, pointed and sharp-edged weapons, asphyxia, motor vehicles, sudden infant death syndrome, fire, carbon monoxide, drowning, and electrocution. In addition, the reader is provided valuable information on less referenced material, including material on infanticide; air, fat, and amniotic fluid emboli; and deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) fingerprinting. A chapter of miscellaneous topics, including anaphylactic deaths, starvation, deaths during dental procedures, and deaths due to other miscellaneous causes is very informative and provides food for thought in cases that might otherwise escape the scrutiny of medicolegal investigation. The book also provides an excellent, up-to-date chapter on toxicology and its interpretation in relation to the field of forensic medicine, including an extensive table

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detailing therapeutic, toxic, and fatal blood concentrations of 114 different drugs commonly encountered in forensic cases.

Noticeably absent from the book is a chapter on deaths due to firearms. However, with the 1985 publication of *Gunshot Wounds: Practical Aspects of Firearms, Ballistics, and Forensic Techniques* by Vincent J. M. Di Maio, attempts to condense such a vast field of information into one or two chapters would be foolish, especially when the combined price of the two books is still much less than that of most single-volume medical reference books today. There is, however, one area of death investigation which is not addressed in the book, and that is deaths due to medical misadventure, such as those that occur during or as a result of therapeutic procedures, including anesthesia. Perhaps such a chapter will be included in a future edition.

In review, *Forensic Pathology* is destined to become a classic reference in the field of medicolegal death investigation. Its format, style, language, and attention to pertinent detail make it extremely readable and yet instructive at the same time. It is sure to entice many future potential novices into the field for years to come. Even the producers of *Quincy* would have benefited greatly from this book.