

## BOOK REVIEW

Prof. Dr. V. Schmidt<sup>1</sup>

### Review of: *Hyperthermia, Burning and Carbonmonoxide*

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**REFERENCE:** Oehmichen M, ed. Research in legal medicine, Vol. 21, Schmidt-Römhild, Lübeck/Germany, 2000. ISBN 3-7950-0318-0, 456 pp., DM 178./US\$87.

Heat, fire, burns, smoke, and the fatalities associated with them are of preeminent importance in forensic-technical investigations and in forensic pathology. The editor of the present volume has offered a valuable service in providing an anthology dealing with the problems and current state of research in this special province of traumatology.

The wealth of the volume's details can not be dealt with a mere review, so I will focus on only a few of its central themes. It begins with a comprehensive survey of the physiology of temperature regulation and the effects of heat on the human body. Computer simulations of house fires are among the book's many highlights. The effects of heat on hair, especially the hair of suspected arsonists, is a basic question in the investigation of all cases of suspected arson; there is also an overview of the psychopathology of the arsonist and

suicidal self-immolation. The pathomorphology of heat and burn effects, especially on the central nervous system, as well as questions of vitality and the time dependence of the burns associated with different temperatures are other fundamental problems dealt with in the present volume. The diagnostic possibilities for detecting carbon monoxide poisoning using Fourier-Transform Infrared (FTIR) spectrophotometry are also examined.

Enlisting the expertise of internationally known and highly specialized authors, the volume attempts to provide an interdisciplinary analysis and overview of all aspects of the chosen topic. Each essay is preceded by an abstract and a list of key words in both English and German and concludes with an extensive list of references. The volume contains numerous graphs, illustrations, and tables and is completed by an extensive index.

In sum, the present volume represents an excellent and thoroughgoing survey of a complex of topics not otherwise available in such a clearly laid out and comprehensive form. This volume deserves the widest distribution and should be a valuable source of information for all forensic pathologists and criminal investigators.

<sup>1</sup> Prof. Dr. V. Schmidt (Halle/Germany), Institute of Legal Medicine, Martin Luther University, B-06097 Kalle Germany.

Editor's Note: The majority of the contributions are in German, but have English summaries.