J Forensic Sci, Sept. 2002, Vol. 47, No. 5
Paper ID JFS2002098_475
Published 7 Aug. 2002
Available online at: www.astm.org

BOOK REVIEW

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Review of *Asphyxia: The Physiopathology*

REFERENCE: Sawaguchi A, Sawaguchi T. Asphyxia: the physiopathology. First ed., Toyo-Shoten Publishers, Tokyo, Japan, 2001, 140 pp.

This is a small paperback book that reviews the different forms of asphyxia. A third of the book's 136 pages are devoted to pathological mechanisms and autopsy findings of asphyxia. There is considerable redundancy from one section to the next. This is understandable because the pathological findings for each form of asphyxia is described, but it is repetitious and unnecessary since the pathology of the various forms of asphyxia have many features in common.

It uses a novel classification of the various forms of asphyxia and never clearly separates strangulation into a separate category that it deserves. Manual strangulation is referred to as mugging, terminology more common in British publications. In the classification of asphyxia, there is nothing new, but there are some interesting comments that deserve mention. In the section that covers choking on a foreign body, methods described to remove a foreign body include back pounding and use of fingers to remove the obstruction. Both of these methods can be hazardous and force the object deep into the airway. The accepted method is squeezing pressure to the chest, i.e., the Heimlich maneuver. The author makes reference to this, but it is listed after "back pounding." Additionally, the author sites the *Classical Triad of Asphyxia*, namely, fluidity of blood, petechiae and congestion. This triad has been shown to be unreliable and has largely disappeared from American literature. There are other novel pathological findings described in association with drowning such as atrophy of the spleen and hemorrhages in the pyramids (the organ is not identified), while failing to mention water in the sinuses of the head or the occasional presence of mastoid hemorrhages.

The remainder of the book is devoted to describing data that were collected from experiments on rabbits and dogs that died from different methods of asphyxia. The blood components analyzed include serum proteins, enzymes, glucose, lipids, insulin, cortisol, and thyroxine (T_4). This data may be of value for a doctorate thesis, but there is no practical useful data that can be applied to routine death investigation. Similarly the last chapter is devoted to acid base analysis and electrolyte data from these experiments. Again there is no useful data to be applied to death investigation, although I found the data of some interest in understanding the pathophysiology of some forms of asphyxia.

This small book may be of some value for someone seeking biological data on asphyxia but it would have limited use for most forensic pathologists.

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