

BOOK REVIEW

Victor W. Weedn,¹ M.D., J.D.

Review of: *Forensic Pathology Reviews: Volume 1*

REFERENCE: Tsokos M, editor. *Forensic pathology reviews*, Vol. 1. Humana Press, Totawa, NJ, 2004, 384 pp.

Forensic Pathology Reviews is a new (April 2004) and ambitious series published by Humana Press and edited by Michael Tsokos, MD of the Institute of Legal Medicine at the University of Hamburg. It is a part of an explosive growth in forensic publications that is difficult not to link to the recent interest from the spate of television shows on forensics. However, the introduction to the series correctly refers to a significant expansion of scientific progress in the forensic sciences and states: "The *Forensic Pathology Reviews* series is designed to reflect this expansion and to provide up-to-date knowledge on special topics in the field, focusing closely on the dynamic and rapidly growing evolution of medical science and law." The introduction further states that the series is intended to take a problem-oriented approach and provide comprehensive and well documented reviews of the international literature with insights into new diagnostic techniques.

The book contains a collection of review articles on mundane to esoteric topics—all of interest to the practicing forensic pathologist. Topics in this first volume include effects of burning, kicking and trampling, alterations of the CNS from drug abuse, sudden cardiac death, neonaticide, SIDS, autoerotic accidents, and hypothermia, among others.

This book is 384 pages in length, including 229 pages of text, 29 tables, 89 photographs (all are black and white). The 15 chapters range from 9 to 57 pages (a chapter that includes 550 references). Only two chapters are without any table or figures.

All chapters are well organized and broken into entitled subsections which are enumerated for easy reference. The text has been well edited. All information is exceptionally well referenced.

The book fulfills its objective to achieve an international scope as authors from five countries are represented (Germany, Austria, U.S., Italy, Australia). Yet the book reflects its origins as ten of the fifteen chapters were authored by German authors and two were written by the editor.

Already, the field of forensic pathology has several publication outlets, including the *American Journal of Forensic Medicine and Pathology*, the *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, the *Forensic Science International*, the *International Journal of Legal Medicine*, *Journal of Clinical Forensic Medicine*, *Practical Reviews in Forensic Medicine and Science*, even Anil Aggrawal's *Internet Journal of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology*. Of course, many significant forensic pathology articles are also published in mainstream medical journals such as *JAMA* and the *British Medical Journal*. Thus, there is a question of whether the field of forensic pathology can support yet another series.

The publication, available as a hard cover book or e-book, is neither a textbook nor a journal, but rather a series of periodical books. How often such volumes will be published is not stated, but one might imagine once or twice a year. The publication does not cover the field as a textbook would, nor are the entries mere submitted articles, but rather they are detailed critical reviews of narrow topics. In fact, with increasing information, there is an increasing need for precisely this type of commentary. This reviewer believes this series complements other literature and fills an important niche. It will be a daunting challenge to maintain the quality that has been set for this initial volume; however it has already made a significant contribution to the forensic pathology literature.

¹ Visiting Professor, Duquesne University, School of Law and Bayer School of Natural and Environmental Sciences, Pittsburgh, PA.