

BOOK REVIEW

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Review of: *Sudden Death In Infancy, Childhood And Adolescence, Second Edition*

REFERENCE: Byard, RW. Sudden death in infancy, childhood and adolescence, second edition. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004.

The second edition of this text is undoubtedly an improvement of the first, in that all aspects of sudden deaths in infancy, childhood and adolescence have been addressed, from birth to early 20's. This edition has also been expanded with an additional 300 new and colorful illustrations as well as 1200 new references. This added feature of citing numerous references at the end of every chapter will be extremely beneficial to researchers and students alike who are learning to investigate pediatric deaths.

The book is divided into five sections.

The first section gives an overview of sudden pediatric deaths and the definition of commonly used terms such as "sudden" and "unexpected"; and what constitutes being "well." The author explains that a child is considered well or only mildly unwell, if neither the parents nor the attending physician felt that there was any evidence of serious disease that would require immediate medical attention. However, the author realizes that this may not be accurate in cases of parental neglect and in cases of inflicted trauma.

The second section deals with accidental deaths due to unintentional trauma and the third section deals with homicide and suicide due to intentional trauma. Both chapters written by Stephen D. Cohle M.D., Forensic Pathologist from Grand Rapids, Michigan, explain the causation of injuries expertly, along with case illustra-

tions and biomechanics of injury. The added feature of biomechanics of injuries, head injury in particular is a much-needed topic addressed in this second edition, given the publicity and controversy these cases tend to attract. Although the statistical data regarding the incidence of homicide, suicide and accidents is somewhat dated, the references at the end of the chapters are recent and comprehensive.

The fourth and a major part of this book deals with natural diseases by organ systems covering a wide variety of conditions including infections, congenital diseases, bleeding disorders, metabolic and endocrine disorders, asthma, anaphylaxis as well as diseases associated with genetic mutations. Clear and well-captioned color plates help document some of these conditions.

The final chapter describes Sudden Infant Death Syndrome in great detail along with investigation of other factors leading to sudden death in infancy.

The book ends with a series of valuable appendices and checklists, which include pediatric forensic autopsy guidelines and protocols for a variety of situations, such as SIDS, non-accidental injuries, metabolic disorders, infections and poisoning.

This approximately 640-page text is comprehensive and covers a wide spectrum of current issues and conditions related to sudden death in infancy, childhood and adolescence. Every chapter is well written, thorough, extremely well referenced and illustrated. I view this book as a benchmark in the field and a necessary requirement for forensic pathologists, pediatricians or lawyers for their own reference library.

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