

BOOK REVIEW

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Review of: *Forensic Epidemiology: Integrating Public Health and Law Enforcement*

REFERENCE: Loue S. Forensic epidemiology: integrating public health and law enforcement. Sudbury, MA: Jones and Bartlett Publishers, 2010, 193 pp.

Epidemiologists would not necessarily be the first sub specialists that law enforcement officers, coroners, or medical examiners would think of as being a potentially important element of a case. By the same token, epidemiologists might not immediately think they would be of such importance in the justice system. This book is an excellent reference for either group to expand their mindset. The author is clearly an authority in his field and although the book is very technical and a little dry in places, it is a wonderful reference, is very comprehensive, and offers many fascinating examples.

For those not familiar with much of the normal work of epidemiologists, the recent Swine flu shows the important role they can play. I was personally responsible as one of the leaders in managing the SARS outbreak in Canada. The epidemiology data were essential to not only counting the number of cases but also to deciding whom to quarantine. In the event someone did not accept voluntary quarantine then court orders would be sought.

The chapter titled "The Epidemiologist as Sleuth" details a number of cases as examples of using epidemiology in criminal cases. Page 51 has a short description of a case in a pediatric hospital in Toronto. It details much of the important information the study produced. I was involved in this case and agree with how it is described and would add that the study also played a key role in

convincing many skeptical people, including the judge who conducted the Royal Commission, that murders had even taken place at all. There is a reference on page 52 to the morphine-induced deaths in England caused by Dr. Shipman. I also had some involvement in this case and am aware that essentially the cremation and death certificate systems in England were not functioning as any review system at the time and it was the epidemiological work done after suspicion was raised that pieced the case together.

The chapter titled "Epidemiology and Agency Action" details investigation in *Escherichia coli* cases. In the Walkerton drinking water *E. coli* case in Canada, the epidemiological investigation provided invaluable information to a criminal case, civil cases, and a commission of inquiry.

Other chapters in the book explore such diverse subjects as epidemiology and mental health, terrorism and violence, epidemiology and communicable disease such as HIV, and epidemiology and environmental concerns.

The book ends with a chapter entitled "Looking Toward the Future." This chapter looks at issues from a broader perspective such as achieving a balance between individual rights, public health concerns, and the interests of government. It offers further insight into these complex issues and some possible solutions.

This is a book that can broaden the perspective of many diverse professional groups. It has important technical information and uses good true examples. It would be a good textbook for a course but also an excellent reference including very complete bibliographies.

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