

**BOOK REVIEW**

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## Review of: *Quick Reference to Child and Adolescent Forensics*

**REFERENCE:** Muscari MA, Brown KM. *Quick reference to child and adolescent forensics*. New York, NY: Springer Publishing Company, 2010, 456 pp.

Both authors of this volume have the Ph.D. degree and function as APRNs. The first is an associate professor in the Decker School of Nursing, SUNY Binghamton; the second is a practice assistant professor in the University of Pennsylvania. The pair bring to this writing a broad and complementary set of postdoctoral clinical and academic experiences that qualify them well to address fully the challenges of working in their field.

The book's 31 chapters are grouped into four sections: General Principles, Children as Victims, Children as Offenders, and Unnatural Deaths. The writing is generally clear and easy to follow, with a consistent style reading as if written by a single author. With minor variations in accord with the nature of some particular topics, the chapters all follow an order of subject matter comfortable and familiar to health care practitioners. This organizing approach lends itself to both reference use and direct study.

As the preface outlines and explains, each chapter begins by defining the relevant terms, including pertinent distinctions and potential refinements in terminology. The next section summarizes prevalence data, followed by the information on etiology including predisposing factors, correlations, and typologies. Next is a series of sections on the assessment divided into general principles, history-taking, and physical evaluation, complemented by descriptions and critiques of any recognized diagnostic testing and screening protocols. An intervention section covering treatment issues and referral information follows. Finally there is a discussion devoted to prevention at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels (as defined in the preface), along with applications for teaching where the issues and forensic professional's relationships with the parties permits.

The individual chapters in the first section cover the effects on children of exposure to violence, cultural aspects of forensics, assessment, and documentation, principles of evidence including detailed instructions for its collection, the juvenile justice system, expert witness testimony, and professional stress and burnout. The treatment is thorough and thoughtful, with many concise definitions.

The second section on child victims has chapters on child abuse, abusive head trauma, Münchausen syndrome by proxy, sexual

abuse, sexual exploitation, child abductions, psychological effects of victimization, and children of incarcerated parents. Here the reader encounters some startling statistics and the authors' approach to organizing their material demonstrates its worth.

The third and longest section is on the general subject of children as offenders. The authors distinguish three demographic headings for delinquency: juvenile, child (under the age of 13), and female. They then treat separately each of several behavioral types: bullying, school violence, animal cruelty, fire-setting, gangs, sex offending, and dating violence. Once again the authors provide both useful and startling information in an easily followed arrangement.

The final section treats a somewhat specialized group of areas, but their importance is clear. They are as follows: medico-legal child death investigation, sudden unexpected infant death, filicide, child and adolescent suicide, asphyxial "games," and homicide survivors.

Finally, there is a 10-page elementary forensic glossary, a listing of infant developmental milestones, juvenile justice age parameters by state, telephone numbers of crime victim compensation programs, and a set of brief assessment questionnaires.

General strengths of these authors' work include readiness to acknowledge current controversies such as the impact of media portrayals of violence and the importance of recognizing when the limits of one's expertise requires such consultations as forensic odontology or anthropology or even telemedicine. They also include references to many key policy statements from various sources, incorporating them naturally into their logical places in the text. I found only four typographical errors.

Occasionally an unexplained abbreviation occurred. More frequent were the missing citations for assertions that needed them. It would have been useful to cover issues surrounding the recording of interviews as well as the handling of requests to testify in states where the expert is not licensed. Also it might have been well to discuss child and adolescent parricides.

This volume will be of good use to its target audience, pediatric nurses and other pediatric caregivers with a desire for the information on forensic issues. For the broader audience of forensic health professionals, its well-organized abundance of detail will provide a welcome supplement to existing manuals on adult forensic nursing and related disciplines.

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