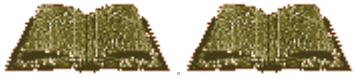
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Book Reviews: Technical Books Section



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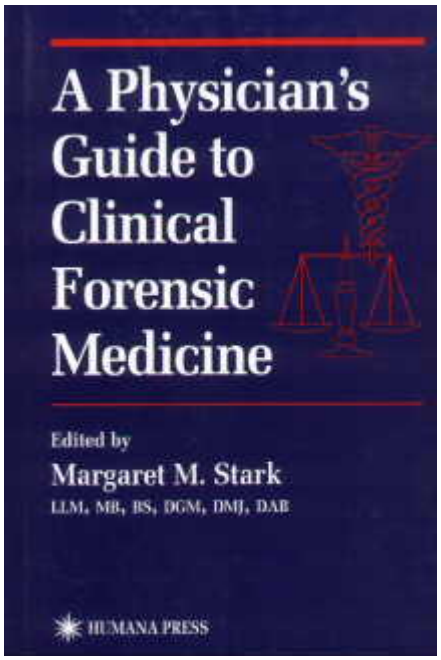
FEATURED BOOK : REVIEW 2

A GOOD INITIAL REFERENCE

[Review 1] [Main Page] [Review 2]

A Physician's Guide to Clinical Forensic Medicine, 1st Edition, *Edited by* Margaret M. Stark. Hard Bound, 6" x 9".
(A Book from *Forensic Science and Medicine* Series by Humana Press)
Humana Press Inc., 999 Riverview Drive, Suite 208, Totowa, New Jersey 07512; Publication Date 31 January, 2000. xxv + 326 pages, ISBN 0-89603-742-8. Price $79.50

Click cover to buy from Amazon



This book is an introduction to forensic medicine. It is written with heavy consideration given to those things relevant to practice within the United Kingdom. In her preface, Margaret Stark gives a great look into the important points the book seeks to address. She has complied chapters written by several contributors as well as some of her own work to create this book. The preface also sets the situations that a forensic physician will encounter.

View this book on Amazon

Marget Stark. For her interview, click on the picture.



Chapter 1 introduces the reader to the history of forensic medicine. The author, Jason Payne-James, begins by separating forensic medicine from forensic pathology on the first page. Table 1 shows the typical roles of a forensic physician. The forensic physician deals with the living patient and assures that appropriate and legally acceptable treatment is delivered to them. The written term, forensic medicine is tracked back to the 19th century. The practice of forensic medicine is documented in the ancient Chinese, Greeks, and Romans. Payne-James then leads the reader through the centuries and ends with Table 3 that gives a over view of forensic medicine practiced in various countries around the world. The chapter ends with a request that forensic medicine be recognized as a subspecialty for those in full-time practice. It also suggests that part-time practitioners of forensic medicine be allowed if they have completed the proper post-graduate training.

Chapter 2 concentrates on ethics, consent, confidentiality, and courtroom demeanor. Using several antidotal stories to emphasizes the points, Roy N. Palmer, gives an insight into the practice of forensic medicine. This chapter finishes the reader's introduction to forensic medicine and directs attention to the coming chapters addressing individual concerns of forensic medicine.

Deborah Rogers and Mary Newton have collaborated to create Chapter 3 that leads the reader through sexual assault examinations. They cover the entire gambit of the assault examination and outline the clinically important points of the physical examination. Collection of samples for forensic examination with an emphasis on DNA analysis is explained. The chapter ends with a section on physical and psychological care for the complainant.

The book is well-illustrated with photographs and diagrams. This diagram showing an exhibit bag with integral label and tamper-evident seal appears on page 45 (in chapter 3 entitled "Sexual Assault Examination")



Chapter four, submitted by Jack Crane, explains tissue injury and interpretation of the wounds. This is a short and well-condensed chapter to introduce the reader to a subject that many entire books have attempted to cover. As with the rest of the book this chapter will be a starting point for the reader who is interested in exploring forensic medicine.

Non-accidental injury to children is explained by Amanda Thomas in her Chapter 5. Although well written, this chapter tends to be too condensed and I would have preferred to have more attention directed toward this subject. This chapter is more of an outline to this subject rather than an informative text.

Chapter 6 is written by Kari Blaho and covers the crowd control agents. It begins with a brief history of chemicals used in war and uses Tables 1 and 2 to explain different chemicals used and their effect upon the human body. This chapter ends by discussing judicious use of crowd control agents and discussed treatment options for exposed individuals.

Margaret Stark and Guy Norfolk discuss care of detainees in Chapter 7. The discussion covers initial examination of detainees, including medical, dental and psychological evaluations. It gives a definition for fitness of interview that is used within the United Kingdom. It also gives a good outline for the examination process to determine fitness. The last section of the chapter discusses individual disease processes that effect an individual's fitness for interview.

Substance misuse is the subject of Chapter 8 and is once again written by Margaret Stark and Guy Norfolk. It begins with the general procedures for taking history and examination of an individual

for substance abuse. This chapter contains several tables that are excellent quick references for information about this subject. The chapter also discusses several individual substances that are routinely abused. This chapter has an excellent section on alcohol abuse, listing symptoms, levels for intoxication and other relevant factors. I feel this is the most informative and well-written chapter of the book.

This photograph appears on page 143. It shows periocular swelling and facial contact dermatitis from pepper spray exposure during an arrest by law enforcement (From chapter 6 entitled "Crowd Control Agents")



Chapter 9 addresses deaths in custody and is written by Richard Shepherd. It begins with the definition of death in custody. It then discusses different types of custodial deaths. This chapter states that deaths in custody related directly to police actions tend to be the most publicly reported. Section 6 discusses that different types of death in custody and the remaining sections expand upon those. The chapter ends with Section 11 that deals with rapid unexplained death during restraint and lists 5 criteria which must be met in order to meet the definition of rapid unexplained death during restraint. Restraint during custody needs to be emphasized during training and continuing education courses to help prevent these deaths.

...I would recommend this book to be added to anyone's library to address their general interest in forensic medicine...

Chapter Ten is the last chapter in the book and is written by Ian Wall and Steven Karch. This chapter discusses the medical aspects of fitness to drive a motor vehicle. It most directly relates to situations within the United Kingdom. It discusses in detail several disease processes that affect one's fitness to drive. Section 3 discusses alcohol consumption, its relationship to driving and legal limits in other nations. Different methods for determining alcohol levels are explained and the ramifications for a person's refusing to give a sample. This section ends with a discussion of postmortem alcohol measurements and ways to most accurately determine these measurements. Section 4 discusses drugs and driving and the effects of specific drugs upon an individual's ability to operate a motor vehicle. The chapter ends by discussing assessment in the field by police and medical examinations used within the United Kingdom.

The book ends with the Appendices which are a very good quick reference for the topics covered in the book. It also references individual sources of information for the covered subjects. Examples of written forms used in the covered subjects are provided at the end of the book.

In an over-all review of the book, I find that it is a good initial reference for individuals interested in beginning the practice of forensic medicine. The book tends to be written in the prospective of one practicing in the United Kingdom, and even though many chapters reference other countries, no detail is afforded to these other countries. Readers interested in more detail would use textbooks that address the individual subjects. I would recommend this book to be added to anyone's library to address their general interest in forensic medicine, but I cannot recommend it for an established forensic physician who is searching for more specifics about these subjects.



-Bryan Chrz

Dr. Bryan Chrz is an independent Medical Examiner for the Workers' Compensation Court of the State of Oklahoma, and consults for Kenyon International Emergency Services. He received numerous certificates of recognition for his activities during the Alfred P. Murrah bombing including a proclamation from the Governor of Oklahoma and a certificate from the U.S. Department of Treasury and U.S. Customs. He was honored by the Oklahoma Dental Association with the Benjamin Franklin Scroll Award for his contributions to the ODA Journal. He is a fellow of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences. Dr. Chrz is a diplomate and officer of the American Board of Forensic Odontology. He also acts as an expert witness in criminal and civil trials. He is on the Board of Editors of Anil Aggrawal's Internet Journal of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology.

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Interview with Margaret Stark, the author

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