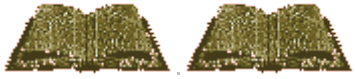
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Book Reviews: Technical Books Section



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A USEFUL MANUAL ON ANALYTICAL TOXICOLOGY

Basic Analytical Toxicology, *by* R. J. Flanagan, R. A. Braithwaite, S. S. Brown, B. Widdop and F. A. de Wolff. Soft cover, 6" x 9.5".
World Health Organization, Avenue Appia 20, 1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland, Publication Date 1995, xii + 274 pages, ISBN 92 4 154458 9, NLM Classification: QV 602: Sw.fr. 60.00; in developing countries: Sw.fr. 42.00

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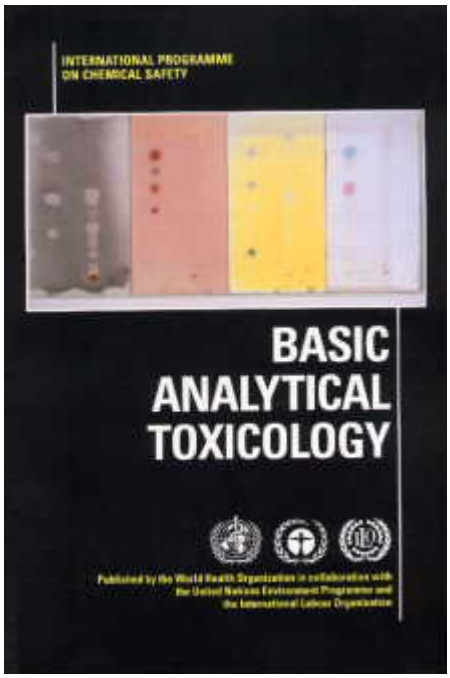


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This book was specifically prepared to describe simple toxicological analyses to be done in cases of poisoning due to common substances and drugs. It is intended for small hospitals and health facilities, where laboratory staff, with a sufficient training, can assist the clinician.

This kind of analytical toxicology is surely no more used in great general hospitals, university departments of forensic medicine or government laboratories, neither for clinical nor for forensic purposes, as it has largely been substituted by instrumental analysis.

Simple chemical analyses have however an advantage in terms of costs and staff training. Problems can be encountered due to low sensitivity (false negative) or interference (false positive), that could be in part overcome by using simple chromatographic techniques, such as thin layer and paper chromatography.

In general only qualitative results are given, because the aim of this manual is to help the clinicians with useful preliminary information.

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Despite authors' recommendations not to use the manual in the forensic context, in my opinion it could be used, provided confirmative instrumental analyses are also performed.

The book shows a way to start analytical toxicology where it does not exist, and this is a great merit.



-Giusto Giusti
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