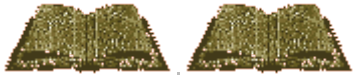
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Books on CD-ROM



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AN EXCELLENT COMPENDIUM OF FORENSIC PHOTOGRAPHS

Atlas of Forensic Medicine on CD-ROM *by* Stefan Pollak and Pekka Saukko; English language edited by Paul Dickens and Stephen Leadbeatter, Publication date: 2003, 1 CD-ROM in number with a case and an accompanying booklet, Over 1600 full-colored and B&W captioned photographs

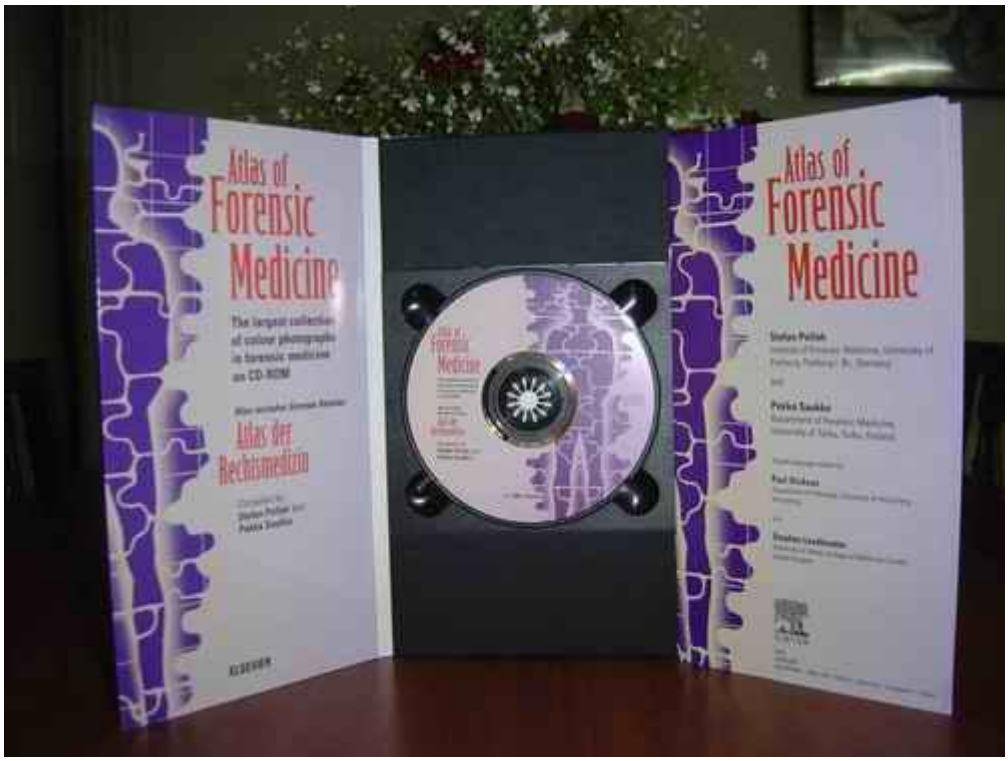
Elsevier Science B.V., Sara Burgerhartstraat 25, P.O.Box 211, 1000 AE Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Publication Date 2003. More than 1600 images of forensic pathological cases, ISBN: 0-444-82597-5 (Single User Version) and 0-444-50712-4 (Network version). Price $ 69, EUR 69 (Single-user version), $ 595, EUR 595 (Network version)

System Requirements: Windows 95, 98, Windows Me, Windows NT, Windows 2000 operating system; pentium processor or better; 32 MB of internal memory (depending on configuration and operating system); 10 MB free space on hard disk; super-VGA monitor in HiColor or TrueColor mode (800x600 or 1024x768 resolution is recommended); CD-ROM disk drive; mouse. For Macintosh computers, a PC emulator, such as Connectix Virtual PC, is required.

For Official site of this CD: the linked page (description)

For other reviews of this CD: the linked page (reviews)

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Two days before I received this CD for review at the Journal office, I happened to get a copy of the latest issue of "*Journal of Clinical Forensic Medicine*". While I was glancing casually through its pages, I happened to catch the review of this very CD by Dr. Benjamin Swift[1] of the Leicester Royal Infirmary, UK. I must confess that reading it was a great letdown.

I was eagerly expecting the CD for review for our own journal, and after reading Swift's review, I thought the CD must be quite an ordinary fare. In his review, Swift raises at least five objections to this CD namely (i) it contains several black and white photographs (ii) several images are of medium quality (iii) CD format may not be good for several people (among the reasons cited is that it takes a lot of time to start a PC and access a program like this!) (iv) Several photographs are rare or unique and are thus useless for most forensic pathologists, who may never get to see them in real life, and (v) the CD does not have an accompanying booklet. Swift then goes on to praise the CD, but it is quite obvious it does not come easy to him. He clearly has to make great effort to do that.

That was the reason when I got the CD for review (two days later), I opened the package with some measure of trepidation. After installation of the program, I began to look for the negative points first. But I must confess, after about one to two hours of intensive search, I drew a complete blank.

Welcome to *Atlas of Forensic Medicine*, a CD-ROM containing more than 1600 astounding images of forensic pathology compiled by Stefan Pollak and Pekka Saukko. We all know Saukko as the editor of the excellent three volume *Encyclopedia of Forensic Sciences* (2000), and now also as one of the co-editors of the third edition of classical *Knight's Forensic Pathology* (2004). You can see his class once again in this unique work.

One of the most useful aspects of this CD is that you can view all 1600 or so slides in any of the six different formats - by chapter, chapter-body region, object-chapter, body region-chapter, manner of death-chapter-body region, and finally simply as slide ID.

What is the difference between all six? Well, this is better seen than described. But shortly, if you want to scan through the slides by chapters, say "the scene of death", "post mortem changes",

"identification" and so on, you must go by the first option, i.e. by chapters. If for some reason, you want to scan the slides by body regions, you have the choice to do so. If for instance, I am taking a lecture on, say, forensic significance of neck injuries, all I need to do is choose view->index->Body region-chapter->Neck, and I get to see some excellent slides on neck pathology relevant to forensics. I get to see a number of pictures on neck trauma, including cuts, ligatures marks in tens of different cases, even a lightning injury on the neck.

View this book on Amazon

For each slide, you get to see three different windows on your computer monitor. The one on the left enumerates all the slides that exist in a particular chapter, body region and so on. The one on the right is further subdivided into two - an upper picture pane and a lower description pane. All the three panes are adjustable with your mouse, and what's more, if you right click on the picture pane, it expands to cover your whole monitor, and you can get to see it very clearly. Right clicking on it again will bring it back to its original size. There is a separate zoom button provided to you too to do the same. You can also simply press F5 to alternate between a magnified and the normal version of the slide.

You get adequate description of every slide, including its slide ID, chapter number and name (so you may not get lost, if you are, say, viewing the slides by body regions), body regions, manner of death, cause of death and finally a detailed description. And you can personalize each slide by adding your own notes too. This is really a very great and useful facility, which has not been provided in previous CDs on Forensic pathology.

Here are a few color slides from this CD in this "Interactive Slideviewer". Click on each numbered button to view a representative slide from that chapter (e.g. a click on button 9 will show a representative picture from chapter 9). The captions appear below each picture. The captions are long and you may have to use your mouse and right arrow button (->) to run through the entire caption.



Some representative color slides from this CD
current picture =

back
1
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next

Black and white slides? Well, there could be some, but I had to make an effort to find them. They are indeed few and far between. Many of them are X-rays, which have to be in black and white in any case. And let me tell you, they are good. There was a time where color photography was not in vogue, and I suspect those black and white photographs are a legacy from that era. The editors included those photographs merely to add to the amazing variety of the slides in this CD.

There is another very useful thing you can do with this CD, which probably will escape the attention of most casual users. Suppose I am taking a lecture on "violence on females" (let us say, for lawyers), and need a set of slides to show to my students, what do I do? There is no such chapter in this CD, nor would a search by body regions would do me great help. I might want to go to chapter 16 (Deaths associated with sexual offences), and then perhaps to chapter 9 (burns and scalds), where I might find a few more slides on female violence, and then to chapter 7 (injuries due to guns and explosives), where I might find still some more. Now how do I consolidate all these slides into one lecture? Simple. Select each slide, click on the tab "add to", choose "new slide set" and give it a descriptive name, say, "female violence", and put your slide there. It is like picking your slides and keeping them in a separate basket. Go on collecting what interests you, and when you are through, take your laptop to the classroom and start the program. On the left hand side, instead of seeing just one tab, namely "all slides", you will see another called "female violence". Click on it, and lo, all the slides which you picked and chose before your lecture appear right there. You can create as many categories as you like (thousands if you wish), and one particular slide can find its place in more than one category. A slide of cut throat in a female could simultaneously be in three different slide sets of "violence on females", "fatal injuries to neck", and "sharp trauma", and still be available in its original group "all slides". Simply wonderful.

Slides of medium quality? I am constrained to say, I couldn't find any. They are all high quality slides. Each one of them shows ample details. Lack of accompanying booklet? Well, there is a big introductory note before each chapter, which is equivalent to a booklet. But yes, it is very unfortunate, you can't copy or print it. I tried a number of ways to fool the program, but it simply didn't allow me to copy or print the text. Pressing Ctrl+A, would not select the text, (as it would in most window based programs). Pressing the left mouse button and sweeping the mouse across the text did indeed help me to select the text, but then the anticlimax came, when a right click on the selected text, didn't give me an option to copy. You also can't search for a slide of your choice by pressing buttons like Ctrl+F. I would have far more liked to be able to search slides by their key words. What do I do, if I am taking a lecture on, say, "torture", and need to show my students a few slides on this subject. A search by keyword, would be the best option in this case, which unfortunately is not available in this CD.

Or what about if I am searching slides on deaths due to, say, arsenic. Since a keyword search is not allowed (I certainly couldn't find it, if it is), all I can do, is go to chapter 18 on poisonings, and search for each slide one by one. Sub-section 18.1 is "drug related deaths", and I could perhaps leave it alone, but section 18.2 (entitled "other poisonings") has as many as 37 different slides, and I have to scan all of them to find slides of my choice. The makers of this CD would perhaps keep this fact in mind for their future editions, and introduce a search facility by "key words".

Rare and unique slides? They really don't bother me. On the contrary they fascinate me. I believe these are actually the strong point of any slide set or atlas. Because if I can't get to see some extremely rare injury in real life, I would be very interested in seeing it at least in pictures. I would at least know that such rare injury is possible and others have seen it. Certainly if I encounter such an injury in my professional life in future, I would not miss it.

...The range of slides shown within any topic is breathtaking...this CD is an extremely useful slide set. I spent hours looking and marveling at it. It would be extremely useful for all forensic pathologists, scene of crime officers, police personnel and perhaps even crime writers. For $69.00, it is virtually a steal...

The range of slides shown within any topic is breathtaking. In chapter 2 entitled "post mortem changes", you get to see as many as 27 slides only on hypostasis, 23 on decomposition, 13 on adipocere and 7 on mummification. Any forensic pathologist can tell you, this is as detailed as one can get. Adipocere and mummification are such rare phenomena, that if you get to see a couple of good pictures in any book, you feel rewarded. But there are a total of 20 slides on these two subjects alone. In chapter 6, entitled "sharp trauma", there are 68 slides on cuts and 93 on stab wounds alone! There is also a very interesting "see also" section (with a spectacle icon), which will take you to related slides.

Another feature of this CD is that you can change the language from English to German and vice versa. All you need to do is click on the "language" tab, and then chose the language. There is a big help section too, which will guide you, if you are facing any difficulty.

Overall, this CD is an extremely useful slide set. I spent hours looking and marveling at it. It would be extremely useful for all forensic pathologists, scene of crime officers, police personnel and perhaps even crime writers. For $69.00, it is virtually a steal. It came as a complimentary copy to me, but after seeing my copy, most of my colleagues are buying it.

References

(1) Swift B. The Atlas of Forensic Medicine compiled by Stefan Pollak and Pekka Saukko, Elsevier CD-ROM 2003 (CD-ROM review). *Journal of Clinical Forensic Medicine* 2004;**11:** 17-18 (Back to the review)

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