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Book Reviews: Technical Books Section

(Page 15 d - Review by Ronald Wright, USA)

FEATURED BOOK

A VERY EXCELLENT WORK WHICH DOES WHAT IT IS ADVERTISED TO DO

[Excerpts] [Interview with Michael Tsokos]

Rating : 9.5

★★★★★★★★★½

(9.5/5)

Forensic Pathology Reviews, Vol. 1, *Edited by* Michael Tsokos. Hard Bound, 6" x 9". Humana Press Inc., 999 Riverview Drive, Suite 208, Totowa, New Jersey 07512; Publication Date 15 April, 2004. xii + 365 pages, ISBN 1-588-29-414-5. Price $99.50

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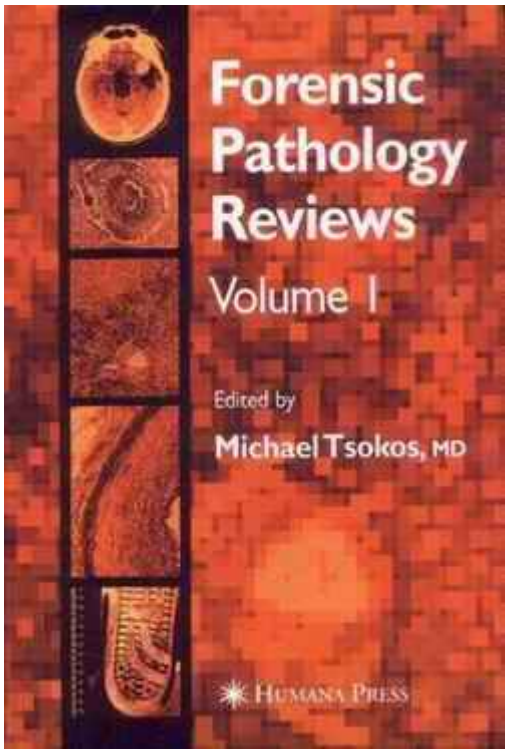

This is the first in a series of reviews edited by Dr. Tsokos. The expressed purpose is to provide a "comprehensive review of the international literature that is otherwise difficult to assimilate" Dr. Tsokos is a practitioner of Forensic Medicine and practices at the University of Hamburg in Germany. Of the eighteen authors whose work makes up the first in this series, ten of the authors are German, four from the USA, two Italian and one each from Australia and Austria. Although somewhat weighted in favor of Germany, the international makeup of the authors at least begins the work as set out in the preface.

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The references in each of the chapters varies considerably, with "Central Nervous System Alterations in Drug Abuse" coming in with 550 references the latest of which is 2002. This may well be the best of the reviews in this first volume. There is a wide range of drugs of abuse covered including opiates, cocaine, cannabis and the amphetamine group of drugs. Oddly enough alcohol, the most widely abused drug in the world, is not considered. Alcohol is discussed by Donna and John Hunsaker from Louisville, USA, but their discussion concerns interpreting alcohol levels in living and dead humans. With one hundred and fourteen references this is a very useful work which pretty well covers the subject. Oddly, there is a typographical error in page 324 which describes the ethyl alcohol ratio of whole blood to serum or plasma as 1:1.8 with a range of 1.12 to 1.17. At 1:1.8 the conversion figure is outside of the range cited in the literature. If the figure is converted to 1:1.08 it is still out side the range. More careful editing would have corrected this problem, but this is really the only such error I found in searching the entire work.

The first chapter on the "Morphologic Findings in Burned Bodies," although having 109 references which are certainly international, is probably one of the weaker reviews. Starting on this chapter sets a somewhat negative tone to the work, although the information contained is certainly accurate, and some of the material, particularly the discussion of the absence of burns on the feet and legs of persons committing suicide by fire is certainly worth the price of admission. Information on the temperatures required to singe hair (150°C) is certainly helpful as well as the

temperature to hemolyze blood (52°C). Weaker here is a relative term, reflecting the extraordinary quality of the remaining works.

Hide-and-die syndrome. This 37-year-old mentally confused woman was found dead lying on the lowest shelf of a steel storage shelving unit in the basement of a building. During the weekend, when she was accidentally locked in the building, the ambient temperature in the basement was between 12 and 15^0C (54-59^0F). Outcome of toxicology was negative. According to autopsy and circumstances at the death scene, the woman had died from lethal hypothermia. This figure appears on page 267 of this book in the chapter dealing with lethal hypothermia.



The second chapter on "Kicking and Trampling to Death" is light on references, only 29 being present. The discussion of absence of defensive injuries with blood alcohol concentrations of greater than 200 mg/dL (0.20G%) is oddly referenced as coming from a study done in the City of Greifswald 1996-2000, but this is not directly referenced to a particular work. While it is possible to discern by careful reading that this information is from the 4th and 6th references, this is somewhat difficult and could have been corrected by adding the reference numbers to table 4.

The chapter on "Timing of Cortical Contusions in Human Brain Injury" is a marvelous chapter, which is probably worth the price of the book alone. The one hundred nine references are certainly international and are well chosen.

"Sudden Cardiac Death," again a wee bit short of references at thirty-five and not very international with only two non-English works, one with an English article by Dr. Davis. However, this represents a very English fascination with this subject and English as the predominate language of publication in this field. The discussion is certainly elucidating of this difficult area.

The chapters on infant and neonatal deaths adequately cover their respective subjects. Drs. Sperhake and Tsokos' work on Waterhouse-Friderichsen Syndrome is exceptionally enlightening.

The photographs which illustrate the work are well done, although regrettably in black and white. Hopefully, the additional cost of color photographs in upcoming books in this series will be understood to be worth the investment.

On the whole, this is a very excellent work which does what it is advertised to do. It reviews the recent forensic medicine works in the international literature and presents the material in a comprehensive and well written way. This book should be in the library of all programs which are teaching forensic pathology and forensic medicine. It should be available to all the practitioners of forensic pathology and medicine to guide them in their difficult job of trying to supply scientific knowledge to the legal system.

-Ronald Wright



-Ronald Wright
Dr. Ronald K. Wright is Associate Professor of Pathology and Director of Forensic Pathology Division at Jackson Memorial Hospital Miami, Florida. He can be contacted at rkw@rkwrightmd.com. Dr. Wright is on the left as you look at the photograph.

Review 1 by Erik Edston, Sweden

Review 2 by V.V.Pillay, India

Review 3 by Benjamin Swift, UK

Review 4 by Ronald Wright, USA

Some Excerpts from this book

An Exclusive interview with Michael Tsokos

Other reviews of this book:

1. Review by J. Scott Denton, MD, Chicago, Ill in *Archives of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine*: Vol. 129, No. 2, pp. 269 (February 2005) : the linked page (?request=get document&doi=10.1043%2F1543 2165(2005)129%3C269:FPRV%3E2.0.CO%3B2) to access.
2. Review by Victor W. Weedn, M.D., J.D., Visiting Professor, Duquesne University, School of Law and Bayer School of Natural and Environmental Sciences, Pittsburgh, PA in *Journal of forensic sciences Jan. 2005*: Vol. 50, No. 1 (Published 15 Dec. 2004): the linked page (4737) to access.
3. Review by Douglas Posey, M.D. in *Newsletter of the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors*: Winter 2004 issue: the linked page (bookreview) to access.

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