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Book Reviews: Technical Books Section

(Page 4 i - Review by Dr. Jenny Ball, Australia)

FEATURED BOOK

A WONDERFUL REFERENCE TEXT TO ALL THOSE INVOLVED IN THE COLLECTION AND USE OF FORENSIC MEDICINE INFORMATION



Rating : 9.0
★★★★★★★★★
(9/5)

Clinical Forensic Medicine - A Physician's Guide, 2nd Edition, *Edited by* Margaret M. Stark. Hard Bound, 6" x 9". [Includes eBook/PDA on CD-ROM]. Foreword by Sir John Stevens, former Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police Service, London, UK
Humana Press Inc., 999 Riverview Drive, Suite 208, Totowa, New Jersey 07512; Publication Date: 11 April 2005. xvii + 438 pages, ISBN 1-58829-368-8, E-ISBN 1-59259-913-3. List price US $99.50 (10% discount with online order).

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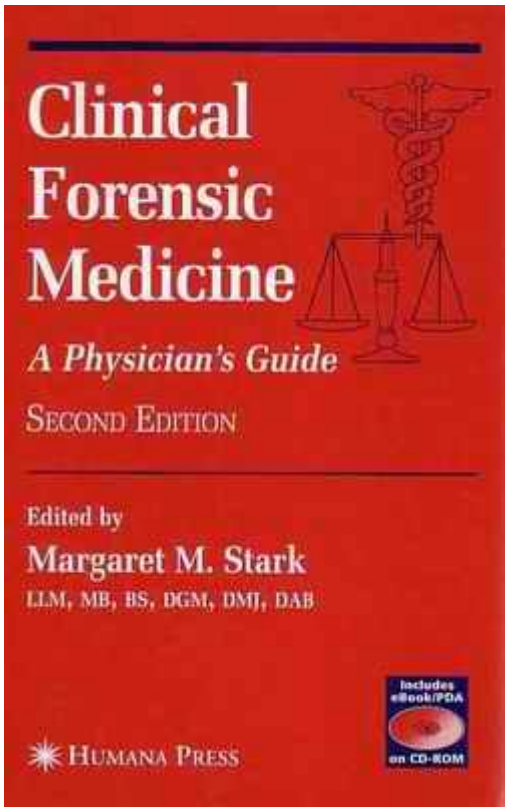

This is the second edition of this book. This book has called on the best in field of forensic medicine to contribute to and write the various chapters. It is edited by Dr Margaret Stark, who is one of the foremost experts in clinical forensic medicine. Dr Stark is the principal forensic medical examiner with the Metropolitan Police in South London and an honorary senior lecturer in the Forensic Medicine unit at St George's Medical Hospital in London. She has published numerous articles and has been involved with a number of books.

The publication of this book is important as there has been too much emphasis placed on the role of the forensic pathologist in relation to the dead victims and not enough on the role of the clinical forensic physician in relation to crime against the living victims. There have been huge developments in this field and all the information needs to be brought together as a guide for those working in the area. This includes police officers, nurses, general medical practitioners; as well as pediatricians, gynecologists, psychiatrists, emergency practitioners, other health care workers and social workers. This is essential for the victims and the well being of the justice system.

This book covers all the traditional areas of forensic medicine and includes additional chapters on relevant issues such as crowd control, care of detainees, deaths in custody and traffic medicine. The first chapter on the history and development of clinical forensic medicine has been updated along with chapters on non-accidental injury in children and the care of detainees. The area of infectious diseases is more comprehensively covered. Aspects of crowd control and restraint by the police is discussed. This includes injuries that may occur as a result of handcuffing to injuries inflicted by truncheons. The area of general injuries has been expanded to include information on the management of bites, head injuries and self-inflicted wounds. The area of substance abuse seems to be forever growing and the assessment of substance misuse in custody has been expanded. Aspects of forensic sampling have been enlarged. Traffic medicine includes effects of a number of drugs related to traffic incidences.

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...All the chapters in the text are clearly self-explanatory and well referenced. Each chapter explains the reason for the collection of evidence required, how it can be helpful and then proceeds in detail on how to collect and preserve evidence. The reason for the necessity to collect forensic information is useful for the non-medical person as well as the uninitiated forensic practitioner. Many points associated with collection are related to United Kingdom law and this needs to be considered for non United Kingdom readers...
The book is now accompanied by a value-added CD ROM that contains an e-book version of the volume purchased. This e-book can be stored on the computer at the work place for quick referencing.

I found it interesting (and scary) to note that with regard to the questionnaire summarized in Chapter 1 on the History and Development of Clinical Forensic Medicine, the lack of qualified forensic medicine physicians and how their qualifications were often linked with the forensic pathologists. Given that we are now in the 21st century one would have thought that this specialty area would be independent and growing however this does not seem to be case. It still appears to be left to general practitioners with little training in the field of forensic medicine and almost no training in legal presentation to pass comment on forensic medicine cases. This reflects the need for this publication. Chapter 2 briefly outlines the responsibilities of an expert witness in court. The outline is brief and would be in such a publication. There are numerous other more expansive texts related to this area.

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The detailed information provided on forensic sample collection is excellent. By referring to this text it will allow many non-medical professionals to proceed with forensic evidence collection in a sound manner.

This is wonderful reference text to all those involved in the collection and use of forensic medicine information. The text clearly sets out the whys and hows of clinical forensic medicine in a language accessible to all those involved in the field.

It is a must purchase for everyone involved in clinical forensic medicine whether they be directly or indirectly involved; non-health or health professionals.

-Dr Jenny Ball, BDSc(WA) BA(WA) FICD

-Dr Jenny Ball, BDSc(WA) BA(WA) FICD
Jenny lives in Western Australia. She has been practicing dentistry for over 20 years. She is currently working part-time. She is chair- person of the Continuing Dental Education in Western Australia. She has an interest in forensic dentistry and currently completing a Masters in Forensic Science.



She is an avid reader of crime books. Dr. Ball can be contacted at sweeball@iinet.net.au

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