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Book Reviews: Technical Books Section

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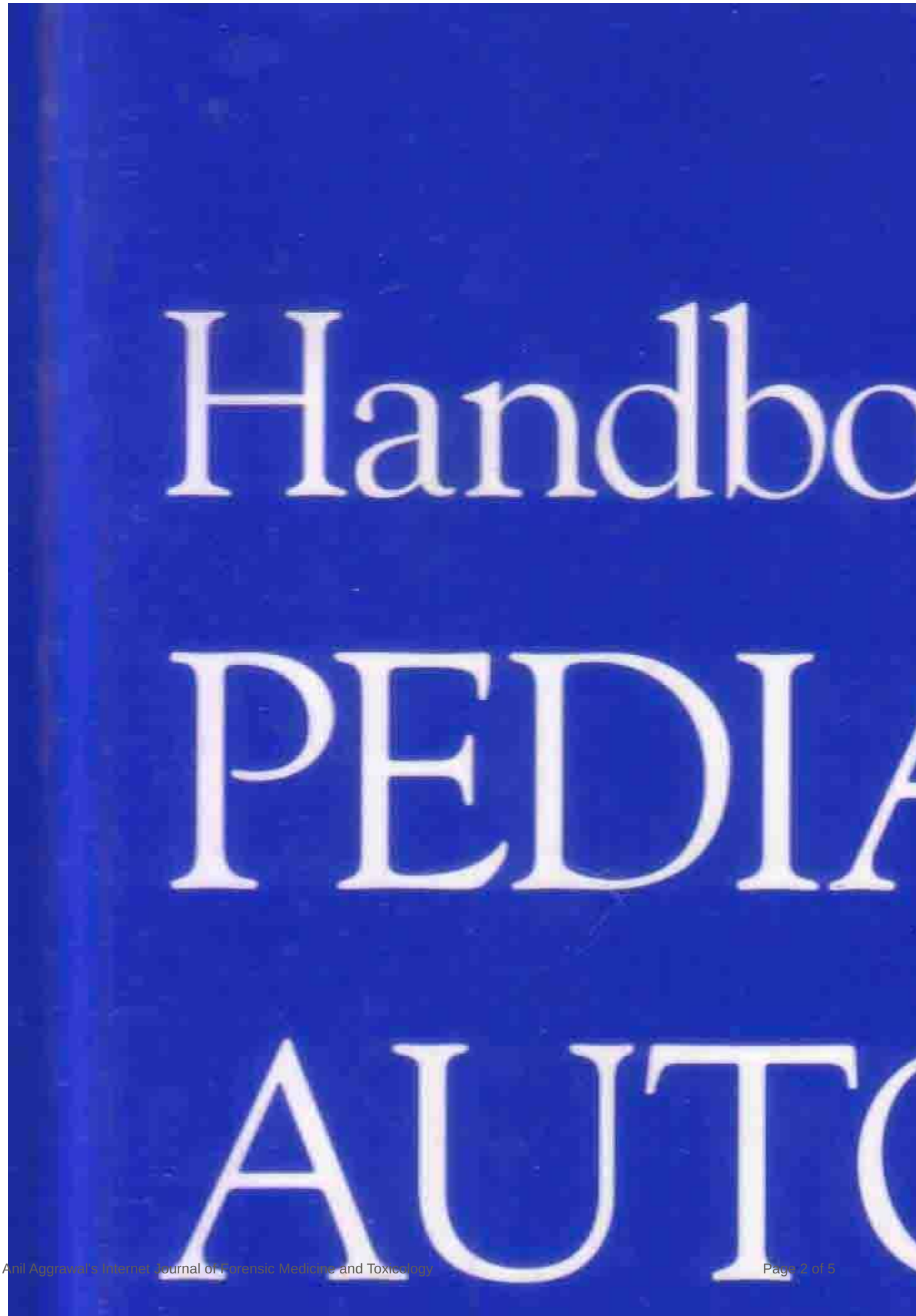
...FEATURED BOOK : MAIN PAGE HEARTILY RECOMMENDED ...I would heartily recommend this book to all autopsy pathologists and trainee pathologists. It is also compulsory reading for the few forensic pathologists like myself who take on paediatric cases... [Main page] Reviews | [1] [2] [3] [4]...

Handbook of Pediatric Autopsy Pathology, 1st Edition, *by* Enid Gilbert-Barness and Diane E. Debich-Spicer, Hardback, acid-free Paper, 11.3" x 8" x 1.2" [Comes with a CD]
Springer, [imprint - Humana], 233 Spring Street, New York, NY 10013, USA ; Publication Date: 28 January 2005. xiv + 531 pages, ISBN-10: 158829224X, ISBN-13: 978-1588292247, E-ISBN 1-59259-673-8. Price $225.00.

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It is not every day that one comes across a book on autopsy pathology, let alone one on paediatric autopsy pathology. Again, it is not every day that one comes across an excellent book like this one.

On merely thumbing through this volume it immediately becomes apparent that this is a comprehensive reference guide to the successful performance of paediatric autopsies and to the correct recognition and interpretation of their pathologic findings. Rather innovatively, this book comes complete with a companion CD which caries more than 400 selected illustrations in colour.

Gilbert-Barness is the Professor of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine, Paediatrics and Obstetrics and Gynaecology, University of South Florida School of Medicine and Tampa General Hospital , Florida and Debich-Spicer is also from Tampa General Hospital . This is a double author book and not a multi-author one although one seems to get the impression that it is multi-author volume because of the sheer size of the work.

The opening chapter is a very short one entitled General Principles. There then follows a comprehensive and profusely illustrated section (Part II) consisting of three chapters: **Paediatric Autopsy, Examination of the Human Embryo** and **The Placenta** . Not only is the equipment required for autopsy discussed but also even basic techniques such as measuring the crown-heel and crown-rump lengths are illustrated. There is a useful autopsy check list as well as numerous charts e.g. **Crown-rump length by Gestational Age, Head Circumference, Foot Length** etc. running to a total of 47 appendices in chapter two alone. All the measurements and league tables that the pathologist needs are all here!

View this book on Amazon

Part III, **Developmental Disorders** , covers Hydrops, Chromosomal Defects and Congenital Abnormalities. The emphasis is on recognition of various congenital abnormalities and to this end comprehensive lists of observed abnormalities are included. These form a useful quick reference type of checklist.

The main body of the book is Part IV entitled **Organ Systems and Metabolic Disorders** which consists of eleven chapters which cover all organ systems, including the Eye and Adnexa, in a methodical fashion. The last chapter in this section covers Metabolic Diseases. Part IV in particular is a well-written encyclopaedic guide. Indeed the whole of the book is an encyclopaedia on paediatric autopsy pathology. The emphasis is mostly on congenital abnormalities, which is what most pathologists need when taking on paediatric cases.

...Quite a useful feature that I came across in the chapter on the Cardiovascular System was the appendix entitled Operative Procedures for Correction of Congenital Heart Defects...
Quite a useful feature that I came across in the chapter on the **Cardiovascular System** was the appendix entitled **Operative Procedures for Correction of Congenital Heart Defects**. Under each named procedure are listed the following: The procedure itself (e.g. Blalock-Taussig, end to side anastomosis, R subclavian artery to etc), the objective of the procedure, uses and complications. Having once muddled through post-operative cardiac deaths in my remote past as a trainee, I wish I had had access to an easy-to-read guide like this!

Another useful appendix (actually three appendices) that I found at the end of the chapter on the skeletal system deals with the appearance of ossification centres. These are quite useful for dealing with forensic type of cases such as abandoned foetuses/still births etc.

The final section, Part V, covers **Sudden Infant Death, Paediatric Forensic Pathology, Special Procedures and Infection Control and Biological Hazards** .

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Each chapter is complete with comprehensive references. To say that the book is profusely illustrated is an understatement. Almost every page carries some sort of an illustration: Half tone photographs, including photomicrographs as well as line drawings.

On the whole it is an easy book to get into partly because of the logical layout of the chapters, tables and appendices. In fact one does not need the index to zoom in on any particular subject.

As far as Paediatric Forensic Pathology goes the coverage in this book is adequate for the average practitioner but those who want a good grounding in paediatric forensic pathology need to look elsewhere. Unfortunately the only book on the subject (**Mason J.K** , ed: **Paediatric Forensic Medicine and Pathology** . London : Chapman and Hall Medical, 1989.) is out of print and out of date. Gilbert-Barness should seriously think of expanding this chapter in future, possibly with the help of a forensic pathologist. In particular, the short paragraph on the Shaken Baby Syndrome is totally inadequate, at least on this side of the Atlantic , in the light of recent high profile cases.

This of course is a very minor criticism and in no way should it devalue this excellent work. Whilst on matters forensic it needs to be mentioned that this chapter carries a comprehensive and well-balanced account of the Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

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The CD based illustrations is extremely innovative. The cost of reproducing colour illustrations is what makes a book prohibitively expensive. By including colour illustrations in this format the price is kept down whilst increasing the usefulness of the text.

The disc runs to 103MB and is compatible with PC operating systems as well as with Mac. I had no difficulty in opening the files, which are in JPEG format and therefore compatible with most photo editing software.

The colour illustrations for the most part are good although a few suffer from colour cast. However, in this day and age of photo manipulation it is a simple task to alter the colour saturation, sharpness etc. to ones satisfaction. I myself used JASC Paint Shop Pro™ for this purpose and was pleased with the results.

The illustrations are arranged in files that refer to the chapters of the book and are easy to locate. However, the illustrations do not carry a legend. The publishers might want to consider a PowerPoint based slide show with text in future editions.

As with all books from Springer, the print quality and the binding of the book is excellent. The book is printed on glossy paper throughout, which is just as well given the profuse illustrations. Four pages of colour illustrations are included in the book.

I would heartily recommend this book to all autopsy pathologists and trainee pathologists. It is also compulsory reading for the few forensic pathologists like myself who take on paediatric cases.



-Gyan Fernando

Dr. Gyan Fernando first studied Forensic Medicine as a medical student at the University of Colombo, Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) where he first assisted at an autopsy. After five years of Forensic Medicine as the Judicial Medical Officer in a remote district of Sri Lanka, which gave him considerable insight into matters forensic, he moved to Britain. At present, he is the Home Office Accredited Consultant Forensic Pathologist for Devon and Cornwall. He no longer practises Clinical Forensic Medicine as this involves getting up in the middle of the night!

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