

Reinhard B. Dettmeyer, Marcel A. Verhoff, Harald F. Schütz: Forensic medicine: fundamentals and perspectives

Springer, 2014, 584 pp, (Hardcover), ISBN: 978-3-642-38817-0

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Accepted: 26 February 2014
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In the preface, the authors highlight that in recent decades forensic medicine has taken a pivotal role in assisting the police and the judicial authorities in their investigative activities because in most cases these organizations do not have the scientific knowledge required to reconstruct a crime. This important practical purpose has been maintained by Dettmeyer, Verhoff, and Schütz in this book by providing an up-to-date and widely suitable compendium about forensic pathology and medicine, well away from the “traditional university-based” discipline with which we are often accustomed.

“Forensic Medicine: Fundamentals and Perspectives” is not only aimed at forensic experts but also at every physician and non-medical investigator (police, prosecutors, attorneys, judges, etc.) involved in unnatural deaths and crimes. Indeed, the book outlines the steps of the investigation’s formal procedures with methodological strictness, starting from external examination and death certification to all corollary analyses on both deceased and surviving victims.

The book is divided into 30 different chapters, focusing on several topics, with the following titles: *Introduction, The External Postmortem Examination, Thanatology, Autopsy (Syn. Post-mortem Examination, Necroscopy), Exhumation, Establishing Identity, Vital Reactions, Blunt Force Trauma, Pointed, Sharp, and Semi-sharp Force Trauma, Gunshot and Blast Wounds, Neck Trauma, Thermal Injury, Electricity, Lightning, and Gases, Asphyxia, Water-Related Deaths, Death by Starvation and Dehydration, Clinical Forensic Medicine, Child Abuse, Child*

Sexual Abuse; Infanticide and Neonaticide, Traffic Medicine, Forensic DNA Analysis, Forensic Osteology, Forensic Radiology, Special Case Constellations in Natural, Unexplained, and Unnatural Deaths, Torture, Forensic Psychopathology, Medical Malpractice, Forensic Alcoholology, and Forensic Toxicology.

At the beginning of each chapter, a “Case Study” is introduced and explained as an example. The text is supplemented by color pictures, as well as numerous tables presenting key points, and easily understood drawings and diagrams. In particular Chapter 25 (*Special Case Constellations in Natural, Unexplained, and Unnatural Deaths*) gives a compact but comprehensive survey about unexpected and unexplained fatalities, as special cases in which the emergency physicians can intervene by first and, sometimes, long before forensic experts. Each chapter is completed by a list of selected references and further reading, adequate to the length of the book. The book ends with appendixes providing several tables, charts, and reference values that can be very useful in the routine practical setting.

In spite of the concisely written chapters, the authors are able to express the complexity and range of forensic skills that may be required by forensic scientists and other professionals who are confronted with such cases, and whom must have competence with at least the basic principles of forensic pathology and medicine.

In summary, this book is a well referenced, modern, understandable guide for forensic and non-forensic experts and law enforcement officers thanks to its clearly arranged structure, even though it does not cover more specialized topics.

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