



■ **'Forensic Neuropathology'**, Whitwell H (Ed), [Arnold Publishers](#), 2005 ISBN 0340700041 £99

Very few texts deal specifically with the forensic aspects of neuropathology, and Professor Whitwell's book has been eagerly awaited. As with other recent forensic titles from Arnold, this slim volume is an excellent read, with formidable 'production values'.

The reader is re-acquainted with basic head and neck anatomy, as well as basic neuroanatomy before being immersed in the world of traumatic head injuries. Overviews of superficial head injuries are presented such as bruises, abrasions and lacerations, as well as the morphology of skull fractures, with information regarding the likely causes of a depressed fracture versus a linear fracture.

Subsequent chapters follow a logical sequence - intracranial bleeds then surface injuries of the brain (contusions and lacerations). Primary and secondary brain injuries are dealt with in detail, as are recent developments in the interpretation of BAPP immunohistochemistry in diagnosing traumatic injury. Autopsy techniques for removing the spinal cord are well presented.

Paediatric neuropathology is an area of current conflict, and this book relies heavily on the work of Geddes and Whitwell - some aspects of which are not unanimously accepted by the forensic paediatric or neuropathological communities. However, the chapters are written fairly, and present both sides of the argument regarding the aetiology of injuries seen in cases of suspected 'shaken baby syndrome'. Forensic ophthalmology is not covered in detail, however, which is a disappointment.

For the general autopsy pathologist, there are excellent chapters on 'non-traumatic neurological conditions in medico-legal work, and the neuropathological effects of alcohol and drugs, which should also be essential reading for all trainees of autopsy pathology.

Clinico-pathological correlation is sometimes difficult for head injuries, and the trainee pathologist is assisted by a helpful overview of the clinical aspects of traumatic head injuries by a Professor of neurosurgery.

Of use to the trainee forensic pathologist are the chapters on interpretation in difficult areas of practice, such as falls down stairs etc, and how to approach giving expert evidence.

This outstanding book is reasonably priced, and fairly unique. It is well illustrated with high quality colour photographs and colour line drawings, and reads well - a feature in common with many other recent Arnold titles. I would strongly recommend it to trainees of histopathology, neuropathology, paediatric pathology and forensic pathology, as well as Consultants practicing in these fields, and recommend that histopathology departments add it to their libraries as soon as possible.