



■ **'Forensic Pathology Reviews - Volume 2'**, Tsokos M (Ed), 2004
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The international forensic literature 'database' is enormous, and packed with fascinating material. However, for those of us with poor language skills, this source of information is not accessible.

Journals on forensic medicine such as Forensic Science International and the International Journal of Legal Medicine are useful conduits to much research, and this Forensic Pathology Series is effectively a well constructed and produced hardbound 'journal'.

Each book in the series draws on experts from their respective fields, and from all over the world, with a healthy German input. Topics are presented in a number of sections;

- death from environmental conditions
- trauma
- forensic neuropathology
- death from natural causes
- child abuse, neglect and infanticide
- suicide
- infectious diseases
- death scene investigation
- forensic entomology
- toxicology
- forensic differential diagnosis.

Collections of interesting papers can be 'dipped into', and each chapter is well written and edited, with select illustrations (unfortunately in monochrome). The standard of referencing is excellent, and an inspiration to delve deeper into the background of the topic.

In this Volume, particular 'treats' are the chapter on 'Practical Toxicology' by James Gill of New York, and 'Arthropods and corpses' by Mark Benecke of Cologne. These provide the reader with precise but detailed overviews of the important adjunct areas of forensic toxicology and entomology respectively, and offer the junior or

inexperienced pathologist an ideal 'taster' of the sorts of issues encountered when dealing with the effects of drugs or insects.

Biomechanical studies into head injuries caused by various glass bottles are described, detailing the physical 'bottle - related' and 'victim - related' factors relevant to wound morphology.

An interesting section on suicide contains 2 chapters - one describing 'complex suicides' where more than one method of suicide is utilised on the same occasion (such as firearm and hanging etc), and the other chapter describing features associated with 'occupational' suicides. These include physicians who poison themselves with anaesthetic agents, and skilled craftsmen who construct devices with which to fire projectiles at themselves.

A discussion of potentially fatal pathophysiological mechanisms is described in many chapters, which is an extremely beneficial feature to trainees, attempting to make plausible clinicopathological correlations in their casework.

Childhood asphyxial deaths are potentially extremely difficult cases to give meaningful opinions on, due to the lack of objective pathological evidence. Byard and Tsokos present an excellent practical chapter on how to approach such cases, with advice on what to look for in different scenarios, such as overlays and strangulation etc.

Tsokos has done an excellent job as Editor of this series, and Volume 2 was a delight to read. I would recommend individual chapters to many of my colleagues who are not specialising in forensic pathology, but who perform medico-legal autopsies in England and Wales on behalf of the Coroner. I would also recommend the book (and series) as a whole to anyone interested in forensic medicine.

There is a considerable international evidence base upon which we must all draw, and these books go some way to bringing that evidence base to a wider audience. On that basis alone, these books must become essential reading for all forensic practitioners.

The full chapter listing for Volume 2 is;

- death as a result of starvation: diagnostic criteria
- skull injuries caused by blows with glass bottles
- primary cerebral neoplasms as a cause of sudden, unexpected death
- obesity epidemic in the United States: a cause of morbidity and sudden death
- infant and early childhood asphyxial deaths: diagnostic issues
- complex suicides
- occupation-related suicides
- sudden, unexpected death related to viral myocarditis: a survey of histological, immunohistochemical. and molecularpathological methods for the postmortem diagnosis
- human primitive behaviour
- arthropods and corpses
- practical toxicology for the forensic pathologist
- long-term effects of anabolic-androgenic-steroid abuse: morphological findings associated with fatal outcome

■ subendocardial haemorrhages