

'Forensic Medicine: Clinical and Pathological Aspects', Jason Payne-James, Anthony Busuttil, William Smock (Ed), Greenwich Medical Media; ISBN: 1841100269 2003 £135

When I first heard about this text I predicted that it would become the definitive forensic medicine book. Time will tell whether this prediction becomes reality, but in the meantime, I for one have enjoyed a cracking good read!

The editors encompass the worlds of clinical forensic medicine (JPJ), forensic pathology (AB) and emergency medicine (WS) and have drawn together a collection of chapters covering not only traditional aspects of forensic medicine, but also those subjects on the periphery, such as the uses of radiological techniques and odontology in forensic medicine, to name but a few.

The text is clearly laid out, and easy to navigate, whilst the illustrations are crisp and mostly in colour.

There is so much of interest in this volume that one can sit down for hours reading a chapter, and then leafing through several more, before again dipping in and reading further chapters.

For those who are researching a particular problem, each chapter is well referenced with up-to-date literature and classic papers alike. Chapters are also excellent summaries of well respected authority's works that appear elsewhere (one particular gem is chapter 12 by Dana and DiMaio on gunshot trauma, which provides an excellent overview of material presented in more detail in DiMaio's seminal text on gunshot wounds).

Human rights issues and mass disasters get a fair hearing in this text, with chapters on human rights abuses, torture, mass grave investigation and forensic anthropology - not always so well presented in other standard texts on the subject. There is a very healthy fusion of clinical forensic medicine (a blossoming subject area in the UK) and forensic pathology, and I think that this type of book is the way forward for forensic medicine. It certainly helps to draw attention to the link between legal medicine and clinical medicine in a way that has been lacking in recent years. Perhaps the format of this book could form the basis of a 'new legal medicine curriculum', with which to train the next generation of doctors?

I wholeheartedly recommend this book to all those interested in forensic medicine in the holistic sense - I doubt whether there will be anything quite like it on the market for some time to come.