



■ **'Forensic Pathology Reviews - Volume 3'**, Tsokos M (Ed), 2005
ISBN 1-588-29-416-1 \$99.50 [Humana Press](#)

Collections of topical review articles offer the reader the opportunity to update knowledge in areas that might otherwise remain inaccessible, due to the material being located in obscure specialist journals.

Fortunately, 'Forensic Pathology Reviews' is a series of books containing selected reviews on essential topics, as well as introducing other less well known subjects.

The first 2 volumes were a great read, and this 3rd volume from Michael Tsokos does not disappoint either!

As with previous volumes, the chapters offer up-to-date thoughts on subjects of interest to those involved in medicolegal autopsy practice, and are well referenced with international literature.

Each chapter is well written by experts, and these authors attempt to distill complex or controversial areas into 'bite-sized-chunks' for those of us without the time to research every topic in detail.

The first chapter offers a review of drowning, and is extremely comprehensive, covering macroscopic findings, as well as microscopic and ancillary tests. This chapter is based on a PHD thesis, and offers the reader a critical review of the essential literature on the subject.

Popular myths in forensic pathology are difficult to dispel, but the author of this excellent chapter shows the fallacies inherent in many such myths relating to 'dry drowning' or 'wet drowning', for example. The poor utility of diatoms in the 'diagnosis' of drowning is also discussed.

For the neophyte there is a well written and illustrated overview of postmortem changes, including artifacts and their interpretation. Similarly the chapter on forensic radiology is probably of interest to trainees unfamiliar with the topic, and will contain nothing new for the seasoned pathologist.

Trainees will also be interested in chapters discussing the medicolegal implications of pulmonary thromboembolism, and Gill describes the potential for DNA mutation analysis in cases of fatal PEs with none of the traditional risk factors.

The Royal College of Pathologists (UK) have produced 'autopsy scenarios' for trainees (and others), which have been well received, and the chapter on the postmortem diagnosis of anaphylaxis fits in well with this approach to forensic pathology teaching. It is well worth a read by experienced pathologists too, as there is up-to-date information regarding the interpretation of postmortem blood levels of mast cell tryptase.

Forensic pathologists are often asked to examine bones found during building works etc, or on a mountainside. One must determine whether they are human, and whether they are of 'forensic relevance'. This means that an assessment must be made as to whether the bones are 'antique' or whether they are less than, say 70 years old, and of importance to the police.

At a recent conference on histopathology, a forensic anthropologist was unable to tell me any useful practical guidelines for determining 'antiquity' macroscopically, but this volume contains an excellent chapter doing just that - with a table of suggested indicators to look for including the lack of adipocere and reduced (or total lack of) UV-fluorescence, a sign described by Prof. Knight in 1969!

Throughout this and previous volumes there is an emphasis on pathophysiology, and further examples of such an approach to forensic pathological 'problem cases' such as the mechanism of death where bodies are found in the 'head down' position are presented.

Histopathology trainees are required to pass exams in autopsy pathology, and must have a firm grasp of the principles of forensic pathology as it impacts on the 'routine' Coroner's cases (in England and Wales). Trainees in other jurisdictions have similar educational needs.

These Volumes by Tsokos bridge a gap between traditional textbooks (often 3 years out of date), and specialist journals (which are not easily accessible by most general pathology trainees) and will be of enormous assistance to those in training and in preparation for exams.

I would strongly recommend this book to all pathology trainees, and especially those hoping to sub-specialise in forensic pathology.

The full chapter listing is as follows;

- Death from environmental conditions - Macroscopical, microscopical and laboratory findings in drowning victims: a comprehensive review
- Forensic neuropathology - HIV-1 infection of the central nervous system
- Forensic pathophysiology - Death in head-down position
- Forensic odontology - Bitemarks: presentation, analysis and evidential reliability
- Taphonomy - Postmortem changes and artifacts occurring during the early postmortem period; Macroscopical findings on soil-embedded skeletal remains allowing the exclusion of a forensically relevant lay time

- Death from natural causes - right and left ventricular arrhythmogenic dysplasia: pathological features and medicolegal significance; postmortem diagnosis of anaphylaxis
- Vascular conditions - the medicolegal evaluation of fatal pulmonary thromboembolism
- Suicide - trends of suicide in the United States during the 20th Century; Murder-suicide: an overview
- Iatrogenic injury - Iatrogenic injury: a forensic perspective
- Imaging techniques in forensic pathology - Forensic radiology