

BOOK REVIEW

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A Review of Forensic Dentistry

REFERENCE: Sopher, I. M., *Forensic Dentistry*, Charles C Thomas, Springfield, Ill., 1976.

Now that the terms "forensic odontology" and "forensic dentistry" are becoming more known to the dental profession and law enforcement agencies, text books have begun to appear. Everybody wants to get in on the scene. Since Gustafson's book in 1966 and Furahata and Yamamota's book in 1967, which have since become standard texts on the subject, four books have been published. Of the four, this book seems to be one of the best.

Written by a man who is both a dentist and physician, with expertise in the subspecialty of forensic pathology, the subject is covered adequately. For those dentists who would like to know what forensic odontology is about, this book is a good introduction to the field. For those already acquainted, it is an excellent review. For the layman and nondentist it tells what the forensic dentist can contribute to identification of the unknown body; analysis of bite mark evidence; determination of chronological age by the dentition; and dental malpractice and negligence.

Regarding dental identification, I quote, "Finger prints are the most widely used scientific method of identification in the country today. The FBI Fingerprint Division in Washington, DC currently has classified print files on approximately 84 million people residing in the USA. In the US, however, dental identification will never surpass the fingerprint method as the most reliable primary mode of identification of the unknown body. This is not necessarily true in other countries where fingerprint records are obtained only on criminals. Antemortem dental records, unlike fingerprints, are not easily obtained and recorded, are not centrally classified and are not readily retrievable for comparison."

This is one of the strongest statements in the text and bears repeating in this review. Some authors are beginning to use computers to store and classify dental records but the number is too small at present to have any significant value.

The nine chapters in the book are well written, especially the chapter on "Bite Mark Analysis." In the past, this topic has created a lot of discussion at our forensic odontology meetings because of the various opinions of the legality of bite mark evidence in a court of law. A few cases have been decided via bite mark evidence but more has to be presented in order to set some sort of standards. Dorion of Canada is in the process of polling all forensic dentists and gathering data on this subject about which he plans to report in the near future.

The only fault with this text is the lack of color pictures. I realize this would increase the price of the book but it would make the book more instructive.

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