

BOOK REVIEW

Mary Fran Ernst,¹ B.S.

A Review of A Guide to Pathological Evidence for Lawyers and Police Officers, Third Edition

REFERENCE: Jaffe, Frederick A., A Guide to Pathological Evidence for Lawyers and Police Officers, Third edition, Thomson Professional Publishing Canada, Corporate Plaza, 2075 Kennedy Road, Scarborough, Ontario, Canada M1T 3V4.

This 240 page book contains 17 chapters relating to forensic pathology topics (that is, The Medicolegal Autopsy, Questions the Pathologist Tries to Answer, Traffic Fatalities, Stabs and Cuts, etc.), as well as a glossary of forensic terms and 174 references. This publication is intended to provide lawyers and police officers with a basic understanding and working knowledge of the capability and role of the forensic pathologist in the determination of an individual's cause and manner of death. It is skillfully written in clear and concise layman's terms.

The first edition was written in 1976 and the second in 1983. This third edition has been written to update the audience as to the current issues and theories in forensic medicine. A new chapter, Death in the Hospital, has been added. The "Poisonings and Intoxications" chapter has been expanded to include common street drugs and the chapter on "Child Maltreatment" has been augmented.

Because the author's background is in the British forensic system, there are several unique Canadian scenarios that are not commonly encountered in the American death investigation system. An example of this would be "that a pathologist at the death scene would not be allowed to touch a body without consent of the investigating officers." Also, ice floes as injuring objects to bodies found in water are not commonly mentioned by American forensic writers! The author has aptly avoided mention of firearm homicide statistics in the chapter, "Firearm Injuries," possibly due to the significant differences in homicide firearm rates in the United States as opposed to Canada because of firearm legislation.

Several topics are particularly well-developed and will prove very useful. The "bruise development" phenomenon noted in the section, "How Old Are the Injuries?," is well explained. The table correlating postmortem appearance that suggests a particular toxic substance ingestion will be very helpful to death investigators as will be the list of common street drugs and their effects. The uncomplicated explanation of "Head Injuries" was extraordinary. The author explained complex physics theories masterfully so

¹Instructor in Pathology, Executive Assistant in Charge of Forensic Training Programs, St. Louis University School of Medicine, 1402 South Grand Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63104.

that even a novice could readily understand the mechanism of contre-coup injuries. I would suggest that if there is a fourth edition, the author include death investigators in his intended audience.

In only a very few instances, were apparent factual errors found in this publication; and possibly these "errors" are not so, if new research, not referenced, has been published. These few flaws do not diminish this work's impact, however.

In regard to "stomach contents" in the chapter, "Questions the Pathologist Tries to Answer," the author writes that 'many factors influence digestion. *In addition, significant postmortem digestion may occur.*' within the St. Louis, Missouri area Medical Examiner offices, it has been the experience of our forensic pathologists that *significant* postmortem digestion does not occur.

In the chapter "Blood and Other Body Fluids," the author describes . . . *and arteries which are high pressure systems, when injured, emit a spray of blood, the size of the droplets reflecting the size of the artery.* Having checked with several blood spatter analysts (Bunker, Carter, Leroy and Reeves), I am unable to locate any research in which the volume of blood drop has been equated singularly with the size of the vessel.

There is presently research being conducted at the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Laboratories in conjunction with Carleton University, Physics Department, Ottawa, Canada utilizing ultra high speed video that may in the future present more information in this matter. There are many factors (pressure, volume, surface tension forces, etc.) that must be taken into consideration to determine the size of the droplets from an injured artery. However, at the present time, the above statement is too broad and may possibly give the reader the erroneous impression that the droplet size is solely dependent on the artery size.

The 174 references presented include many of the great works of distinguished forensic scientists. This section would be very helpful to forensic science students. The glossary of terms is also very practical and would be extremely useful to novices in our field. The illustrations are of poor quality.

This book is well written, surveying existing forensic pathology topics. It avoids technical jargon when explaining the scope and limitations of pathological investigations to non-pathologists. This publication would be a fine addition to a death investigation system's or law library.