

## BOOK REVIEW

*Lawrence B. Erlich,<sup>1</sup> M.D.*

### Review of: Karch, "the Pathology of Drug Abuse"

---

**REFERENCE:** Karch SB. The pathology of drug abuse, Second Edition, CRC Press, New York, 1996, \$65.95.

Dr. Steven Karch's book the Pathology of Drug Abuse deals with much more than pathology. It deals with drugs of abuse in detail and depth. It deals with issues ranging from the history of each drug, the nature of the processing, or manufacture of each drug, the human pathology produced by drug use and clinically useful pearls about the drug abuser.

The book is written in textbook style. There is little relation and each sentence is packed with information. I found that I extracted more information from parts of the book by rereading them.

The book contains chapters on cocaine, other stimulants, both natural and synthetic, hallucinogens, narcotics, solvents, and a very welcome chapter on anabolic steroids. The chapter on steroids deals with the history of the drugs, and clinical impact of the drugs,

metabolism, the legitimate clinical use, steroid related diseases, detecting steroid use, and even the psychiatric complications of steroid use.

Similarly, the chapter on cocaine deals with custom of coca chewing 3000 years ago, the 19th century discoveries of Koller and Freud, routes of administration, cocaethylene, metabolism, interpretation of urine drug screening, the pathology of tissue injury from cocaine use, epidemiologic studies. He also discusses clinical pearls such as crack keratitis, a corneal injury that comes about because crack users rub their eyes, transferring cocaine to the corneal surface and the local anesthesia prevents them from knowing that the eye has been injured. He also discussed "crack thumb" a calus that crack users get on their thumbs due to the use of cigarette lighters.

It is easy today for physicians to become technicians rather than professionals. A technician knows how to respond to a problem. The professional has the depth of knowledge that brings real understanding to a problem. This book presents a comprehensive view of each subject that it discusses. Dr. Karsh's book is a book for professionals.

<sup>1</sup> P.O. Box 83428, Baton Rouge, La 70884-3428.