

BOOK REVIEW

Homer R. Campbell,¹ D.D.S.

Review of: *Bitemark Evidence*

REFERENCE: Dorion RBJ, editor. *Bitemark evidence*, Marcel Dekker, New York, NY, 2005, 629 pp.

This book is the first comprehensive text published on the topic of bitemarks and is a must for both the beginning odontologist and the experienced practitioner. It also provides information to others with an interest in bitemark evidence. There are 30 chapters by 21 contributors within the various sections or parts. The text is well supported by 508 B&W and 77 color photographs and 53 charts, graphs, and drawings.

The book is divided into 13 parts (I through XIII):

Part I. This is an historical perspective all the way from Adam and Eve, through the present and into the future. It is the best history I have read.

Part II. This is titled "*Bitemark Recognition*" and consists of three chapters:

- "*The Role of Health Professionals in Diagnosing Patterned Injuries from Birth to Death.*" This title is very broad considering that the chapter only discusses bitemarks.
- "*The Role of the Medical Examiner/Coroner/Pathologist,*" and
- "*Team Work in Bitemark Investigation.*"

Part III. This is titled "*Description of the Bitemark*" and contains two chapters: "*The Nature of Bitemarks*" and "*Reconstructive Bitemarks.*" These deal with the basics of bitemarks.

Part IV. This is titled "*Collection of Bitemark Evidence*" and contains two sub-parts: "*Noninvasive Analysis*" and "*Invasive Analysis.*" The first contains chapters on photography, digital imagery, bitemarks as biological evidence, bitemark impressions, SEM, and nonperishables and perishables. The second chapter focuses on tissue specimens, histology and timing of injury.

Part V. This is titled "*Bitemark Variables and Cases*" and includes chapters on animal, dog and human bitemarks. The highlight of this chapter is 28 pages of color photographs of bitemarks. The last chapter in this section deals with patterns, lesions and trauma-mimicking bitemarks.

Part VI. This is titled "*Collection of Evidence from the Suspect.*" This chapter provides a guide for evidence to be collected

from the suspect and what items should be requested from law enforcement.

Part VII. This is titled "*Methods of Comparison.*" This chapter includes a discussion of the various methods used for comparison and it makes the point that at this time there is no recommended procedure for comparison.

Part VIII. This is titled "*Reports.*" This chapter provides the reader with the various components that should be considered when writing a bitemark report and includes details of other information that may need to be retained.

Part IX. This is titled "*Prevention and Contamination.*" The introduction describes this chapter by stating that it includes "*proposes means and methods of protecting the forensic examiner/assistant from contamination or infection emanating from a living/deceased individual.*"

Part X. This is titled "*Legal Considerations and the Courtroom.*" The four chapters: "*Science and the Law, Case Law, Courtroom Aids in Bitemark Evidence, and Legal Liability*" are must read chapters.

Part XI. This is titled "*Contentious Issues.*" The first chapter in this section, "*Reliability of Bitemark Evidence,*" reaches the conclusion "*the research suggests that bitemark evidence, at least that which is used to identify biters, is potentially valid and reliable methodology.*" The other chapter is "*Unresolved Issues in Bitemark Analysis.*" The author lists the following as issues: (1) human skin as a bite registration material; (2) methods of analysis; (3) the use of bitemark analysis as purely exculpatory evidence, levels of conclusion; and (4) the uniqueness of the human dentition. In his conclusion the author states, "*It is healthy that within any discipline some contentious issues exist; indeed, without an inquisitorial approach and a rejection of current theories or practice, no science would advance.*"

Part XII This titled "*Research*" and includes two chapters. The first concerns research past, present and future and the second genotypic comparison of oral bacteria from the biter to the bite.

Part XIII are the five appendices for readers to review and use.

I would like to complement the authors for the breadth and depth of material included. The editor deserves special recognition for his efforts in making this book happen.

¹ Office of the Medical Investigator, MSC11 6030, 1 UNM, Albuquerque, NM 87131.