

Book reviews

B. Knight (1991) Forensic Pathology. Edward Arnold, London Melbourne Auckland, 584 pages, £ 130. ISBN 0-7131-4550-1

The title of this very extensive book extending to over 500 pages, clearly describes what the reader can expect. The areas covered do not include every aspect of Legal Medicine, they do however, include everything which must be considered for the examination of the living and the deceased to prove or exclude the involvement of another party. Even by the initial perusal of this book it can be seen that the figures have been carefully selected and described which is a great achievement for a single volume. The book contains only black and white photos. However, these contain all the important details so that a colour reproduction would add nothing more to the quality. Additionally a range of very informative sketches are included which demonstrate the most important facts, an example of which is given for the explanation of the causes of external suffocation (page 335) or by the description of the passage of electricity through the body by electrocution (page 295). These show certain similarities to the style seen in the text book from Ponsold (3rd edition, 1967, Thieme-Verlag). The sketches given by Knight are very suitable for the instruction of medicine students, lawyers and police officials.

The text is divided into 34 chapters, beginning with explanations of the execution of a legal postmortem and ending with deaths due to the effect of organic solvents. The chapters inbetween deal with various forms of violent deaths, including the characteristic patterns of injuries found in traffic accidents. Advice is given on the possibilities of false interpretation as, for example, by the assessment of stabbing injuries in respect to the weapon or by the assessment of bleeding in the soft tissues of the neck, if the investigation is not carried out after blood drainage. The text contains an abundance of good advice for the interpretation of findings, which can be confirmed by any experienced forensic pathologist. The price is appropriate for such a book, rich in information and documentation, which in a manner of speaking combines both atlas and textbook. It can be recommended for all practitioners of Legal Medicine, especially those involved in teaching. From the point of view of a German forensic pathologist it is, however, noteworthy that important contributions from German-speaking authors are only mentioned when they have been published in English. Hopefully the grotesque errors occurring in the very few papers cited in the German language can be corrected before a new edition appears.

G. Reinhardt, Ulm

Edmund Critchley and Andrew Eisen (1992) Diseases of the Spinal Cord. In: Michael Swash (ed) Clinical medicine and the nervous system. Springer-Verlag, Berlin Heidelberg New York, 453 pages, DM 236.00. ISBN 3-540-19684-6

This book provides extensive information on the diseases of the spinal cord in the form of a clinical text-book. The editors stress that this field of the central nervous system has previously been ignored in both neurology and in neurosurgery. This book aims to

fill this gap and does so with success. Apart from anatomical features, details are also given on the physiology, the neuropathology, optical techniques and an interesting medico-legal problem (complications by lumbar punctures) and especially from the clinical aspect: malformations, prolapse of the disc, vascular diseases, degenerative and inflammatory diseases, tumors etc. Other aspects which are covered include trauma, decompression sickness and spontaneous subdural and epidural bleeding. Each chapter deals with the pathogenesis, the clinical symptoms and therapy, and an attempt is made to give a detailed review which also includes the more rare diseases. In each case extensive literature references are necessary, and it is pleasing that this provides access to more intensive studies. In spite of the fact that many authors have been responsible for the various chapters, the book has a uniform structure, so that unavoidable repetitions are kept to a minimum. This book is especially recommended as a reference work for doctors practicing in the field of neurology.

M. Oehmichen, Lübeck

Eugene J. Kucharz (1992) The Collagens: Biochemistry and Pathophysiology. Springer-Verlag, Berlin Heidelberg New York, 430 pages, DM 218.00. ISBN 3-540-53323-0

This is a monographical collection of the present knowledge about collagen. The author describes the structure, heterogeneity and distribution, synthesis, degradation and turnover of collagen. He describes the dependence on age as well as on the hormonal and immunological status. The physiological and pathological significance of collagen in various organ systems and the influence of pharmacological substances are also discussed. On reading this book the significance of collagen becomes clear: there is no organ without collagen and many diseases are accompanied by the participation of collagen. In recent years literature in the field of basic research and clinical investigations has increased at such a rate that can rarely be envisaged (the references encompass more than 100 pages). At present 13 collagen types are known, but it is certain that the next types will soon be discovered. This means that many research groups are active in this field. The most important aspect for Forensic Medicine seems to be the significance of collagen in the process of wound healing and it is disappointing that only 3 pages with no substantial information are offered on this topic. Independent of this point this book offers an up-to-date compendium on research in this field.

M. Oehmichen, Lübeck

B. Kaempe (1991) Forensic Toxicology. Proceedings of the 29th International Association of Forensic Toxicologists meeting in Copenhagen, 24th–27th June 1991. 549 p, US\$ 50. ISBN 87-997133-1-4

Approximately 150 toxicologists from 31 countries attended the 29th TIAFT meeting in Copenhagen. Prof. Dr. B. Kaempe gives a review in this book on 83 papers and posters presented at this conference.

The program can be divided into different parts.

The first part includes the methods of drug analysis in biological fluids. Vinsen et al. (USA) show a solid phase extraction with HPTLC. Balabanova (Germany) presents two papers on the detection of cocaine and methadone in hair.

A second part gives detailed information about the state of quality assurance (Q.A.) for the testing of drugs of abuse in different countries. Wethe (Norway) gives a review about external quality control in nordic laboratories. Butler (USA) and Ferrara (Italy) show quality assurance in analysis of drugs of abuse.

Uges (The Netherlands) and Sequera (Spain) request in their papers international cooperation. Other papers show the state of Q.A. in Germany, Great Britain, Luxembourg, Belgium, Denmark, France, Ireland, Portugal and Greece.

Another part is on immunochemical themes. Halbach (Germany) presents detection limits of immunoassays for benzodiazepines in urine. Lemm-Ahlers (Germany) refers to immunological analysis of tricyclic antidepressants. Tsoukali (Greece) shows different immunochemical techniques.

Other interesting papers are for example: application of base-deactivated HPLC-RP-Columns (Bogusz, Germany) or the analysis of baclofen by Frazer (USA). Dunett (U.K.) explains the problems

with installing the LIMS (Laboratory Information Management System).

Some very interesting papers regarding the trace analysis of volatile compounds from Steet (U.K.), Nagata (Japan), Schubert (Germany), Deveaux (France)). Felby (Denmark) solves these problems by a cryofocusing method.

Other scientific parts are on various themes.

A. Martin presents a paper to investigate postmortem blood in deaths involving insulin. GC-MS methods for 6-acetyl-morphine are shown. There are case histories of deaths by herbicides (paraquat+fusilade), insecticides (carbaryl, dieldrin, aldrin), germanium, methomyl, zopiclone and buflemodil. Benzodiazepines continue to be of interest around the world (5 papers) as well as tricyclics (6 papers).

The book is concluded by two interesting papers: B. Kaempe gives a review about the evolution of forensic chemistry in Denmark from 1960–1991 and R. Müller (Germany) shows details about present and future systematic toxicological analysis (STA).

In the interest of speedy publication and to protect the authors B. Kaempe has, in most instances, reproduced manuscripts without change.

B. Brinkmann, Münster