

Forensic neuropathology and associated neurology Oehmichen M., Auer R.N., König H.G.

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When the forensic pathologist reaches the limits of his knowledge on neuropathology, he must seek advice from specialised neuropathologists. Under normal circumstances, this is adequate. And yet it does occur that professional cooperation is obstructed in cases where the forensic pathologist—with his limited neuropathological insight—meets head on with a neuropathologist, who in turn has a limited grasp of the specific and pragmatic forensic viewpoints. Mechanical, hypoxic and toxic injuries of the nervous system are major problems in forensic pathology, but the preferences neuropathologists have often lie in other areas of the specialty.

In their book *Forensic Neuropathology*, Oehmichen, Auer and König cover the areas in this specialty where the gaps in the knowledge of both experts border on each other. The book is, therefore, a gap-filler in the best sense of the word—and a comparison with Unterharnscheidt's "Traumatologie von Hirn und Rückenmark" (Traumatology of the brain and spinal column, volume 13 of *Special Pathological Anatomy* from Doerr and Seifert) seems obvious: but there is no comparison. Unterharnscheidt's contribution is a treasure trove of historical casuistry in which everyone will find something valuable, if they but look long enough. When browsing through this voluminous book, it becomes apparent how difficult it must have been to maintain an orderly chest of jewels. *Oehmichen, Auer and König* have achieved this with their unyieldingly tight

organisation, so that always, a corresponding section for each relevant question can quickly be located. The specialised field is systematically but also comprehensively treated within a scope of less than 700 pages. The illustrations are abundant and of high quality. The casuistry plays practically no role, in contrast to Unterharnscheidt's books. There is no question that both books are an obligation and an asset for any forensic pathologist's library.

The first 100 pages deal with the pillars of medico-legal practice (risks, responsibilities and liabilities) and important areas of general neuropathology (cytology of the CNS, cell and tissue reactions, methods in forensic neuropathology). One of the main chapters, comprising 150 pages, treats mechanical trauma of the brain and spinal cord. In accordance with the title, the subject also has clinical neurological aspects. Other important topics are the neuropathology of asphyxia and intoxication. Pediatric neuropathology is given its own chapter, with highly informative discussions of the forensic problems arising from shaken infant syndrome. Finally, there is a comprehensive list of the most common natural causes of sudden unexpected death (seizures and epilepsy, vascular diseases, inflammatory diseases, nutritional and metabolic insults, ageing and brain pathology).

The authors have succeeded in producing an urgently needed and long-since-overdue presentation of a specialty in forensic pathology and neuropathology that confronts the forensic pathologist on a daily basis.

Neuropathological, clinical neurological and forensic aspects, too, have been considered. The text is not too long but sufficiently comprehensive. It will be absolutely clear to the reader that this book should have been written long ago. Credit and recognition are due to Oehmichen, Auer and König that this has finally happened.

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