

forensic evidence can be used to aid an interviewer in more clearly understanding the defendant and in eliciting valid responses to questions. Chapter 19, regarding false confessions, provides a useful review of the literature and experience in this area. Although Chapter 18 takes a clearly pro–death-penalty stance in places, the overall balance points to a desire to avoid false confessions in the first place.

Chapter 5 stands apart from the other chapters in the Manual in that it examines a highly controversial topic: the development and use of measures of depravity. Questions raised by this material are far from settled. This chapter could easily be read (or misread) as an attempt to add an aura of scientific quantification to what amounts to the normal visceral reactions elicited by the facts of many heinous crimes, especially those in which the death penalty is considered during sentencing. The section was absent from the first and second editions; I'm not sure what it adds to the third.

Angela M. Hegarty, MD
North Great River, NY

Disclosures of financial or other potential conflicts of interest: None.

Landmark Cases in Forensic Psychiatry

By Elizabeth Ford and Merrill Rotter. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014. 240 pp. \$39.95.

Drawing from their experience in forensic psychiatry, Elizabeth Ford and Merrill Rotter have compiled *Landmark Cases in Forensic Psychiatry*. With the purpose of training others in topics related to mental health and law, they designed their book “with forensic psychiatry and psychology trainees and practicing clinicians in mind” (p xxi). They add that this book is intended to fill a gap in the study of landmark cases included in the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology (ABPN) examinations in forensic psychiatry.

The American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law (AAPL) has long maintained a list of more than 100 legal cases that represent the scope of the specialty of forensic psychiatry. These cases are commonly introduced during forensic psychiatry fellowship training and may be a source of questions for forensic examinations. In 2013, The ABPN published a content

outline for the certification examination in forensic psychiatry.¹ Drs. Ford and Rotter have provided case summaries for all of the cases identified in the ABPN outline. They selected and summarized additional legal cases that they identified as important in facilitating understanding of particular mental health concepts.

The book is organized into five broad sections: “Mental Health Practice Guidelines,” “Institutional Treatment Guidelines,” “Child and Adolescent Issues,” “Tort Law,” and “Criminal Law and Incarceration.” Each section includes several independent chapters related to the broad topics, but with a more narrowed focus. For example, the first section on “Mental Health Practice Guidelines” is divided into chapters on “Confidentiality and Privilege,” “Informed Consent,” “Duty to Protect,” and “Expert Testimony.” Although each chapter is organized by cases in chronological order based on the court’s decision date, each case, chapter, or section can be read in any particular order.

Each case summary includes the title and legal citation for the case. For some of the summarized cases, an abbreviated case title is used. The case citations do not directly identify the court that issued the opinion, and so the reader must be familiar with the reporter in which the case is recorded. With each case is a link referring the reader to a free online source to access the full case opinion. All of the case summaries include a yes-or-no question aimed at the main holding of the case. Each case has a one- to two-paragraph synopsis of the majority opinion. The synopses include, in varying degrees, information about the procedural history of the case, relevant facts, previous rules of law relevant to the topic, and the court’s rationale in support of the identified case holding.

The strength of the text lies in its usefulness in testing the reader’s understanding of the landmark forensic cases. The case summaries are brief and address the main points of the legal decisions. At the end of each section are several multiple-choice questions with discussions of the correct answers. Some of the answers provide definitions for basic legal terms or comment on how the legal case relates to other cases. The questions help to illustrate some of the most important points in the cases.

A criticism of the book is that it does not identify which cases have been overturned, superseded, or modified by subsequent law. Although the editors state in the introduction that some cases “have been

overturned by higher rulings” (p xxi), this information is absent from the case summaries or chapters. In some instances, this deficiency can lead to a misunderstanding of current law or jurisdictional variation in the law. The multiple-choice questions primarily focus on the specific holdings of the landmark cases, which can add further confusion as to the current state of the law in any particular area. By way of illustration, the first section has a general question on the psychiatrist’s duty to protect others from the violent acts of their patients. The correct answer to the question refers to the landmark California Supreme Court case *Tarasoff v. Regents of the University of California* (1976)² and provides commentary based on state-specific cases showing that other jurisdictions have laws similar to California’s. This format ignores, however, that some states have statutory laws (rather than case law) on the topic, that state laws vary markedly, and that some states have yet to establish specific laws on this topic.

Those likely to benefit from this book are trainees in forensic mental health fields, including forensic

psychiatry fellows, who will find it a valuable and practical source for understanding and studying mental health law, and forensic psychiatry practitioners looking for a brief guide to the landmark cases.

Despite its limitations, the book fulfills an important role as a quick resource for understanding and reviewing the landmark cases in forensic psychiatry. The editors have convincingly accomplished their goal of filling a gap in material available for studying the landmark cases tested on the ABPN certification examinations in forensic psychiatry. I would have used the text in reviewing material for the examination.

References

1. ABPN. Subspecialty Certification Examination in Forensic Psychiatry, 2013 Content Blueprint, January 4, 2013
2. *Tarasoff v. Regents of the University of California*, 551 P.2d 334 (Cal. 1976)

Jennifer Piel, JD, MD
Seattle, WA

Disclosures of financial or other potential conflicts of interest: None.