

misguidedly distorted by preoccupation with diagnosis.

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## **Quick Reference to Adult and Older Adult Forensics: A Guide for Nurses and Other Health Professionals**

By Kathleen M. Brown and Mary E. Muscari. New York: Springer Publishing, 2010, 453 pp. \$60.00.

Kathleen M. Brown and Mary E. Muscari come from nursing backgrounds and wrote their book to educate nurses and other health care professionals about general topics related to forensics. Winner of the 2010 *American Journal of Nursing* Book of the Year Award in the area of Gerontologic Nursing, their text has been acclaimed for filling a niche for clinical providers who encounter victims and violent offenders.<sup>1</sup> This text supplements a complementary book by the same authors, *Quick Reference to Child and Adolescent Forensics: A Guide for Nurses and Other Health Care Professionals*.<sup>2</sup> The text addresses topics relevant to both physical and mental health forensic assessments.

The book, which begins with an introduction to general principles of violence, is organized into four sections: General Principles, Adults and Older Adults as Victims, Adults and Older Adults as Offenders, and Unnatural Deaths. The last section focuses on medicolegal death investigations, including suspicious deaths in long-term care facilities and deaths by suicide and homicide. Each section includes several independent chapters that can be read in any order. Despite the title, distinct chapters define an older and an elder adult differently, and few chapters distinguish concepts for an adult versus an older adult.

The chapters address topics commonly presented in forensic guides, including evidence, expert witness testimony, intimate-partner violence, stalking, and violence risk assessment, among others. Beyond customary topics, Brown and Muscari also included chapters on professional stress and burnout, victim

services, abusive parents, animal cruelty, and parenting while incarcerated.

The chapters are organized to provide definitions, prevalence information, etiology, and classifications and assessment guidelines for the health care provider, followed by therapeutic interventions, prevention guides, resources, and references.

The strength of this text lies in its coverage of physical signs of violence, assessment, and documentation. The chapter, "Principles of Evidence," deserves special mention for its succinct discussion of how to identify and preserve physical evidence, such as clothing, hair and fiber, and body fluids, and how to maintain the chain of custody. Another chapter lists characteristics of common types of wounds and how to document such injuries. Eight pages of color photographs of physical injuries help to illustrate some important findings in a reader-friendly manner.

In contrast, the guide lacks detail when covering many of the topics relevant to mental health. In addition, several inaccurate statements appear. By way of illustration, in a chapter on guardianship, the authors provide a cursory description of the responsibilities of a guardian. They put forth a best-interest standard without providing any citations and fail to mention the alternative standard of substituted judgment. In a chapter titled "Offenders with Mental Illness and Cognitive Impairment," in which the authors address the topic of screening assessment tools, they state that there are tools for screening for specific disorders but incorrectly assert that there are no general screening tools. Some mental health providers are likely to take issue with the descriptions of certain mental disorders. In describing schizophrenia, for example, the authors write, "Paranoid schizophrenia is a common concern in criminal justice, as it describes those who hear voices that command them to kill, stalk, or destroy property" (p 249). There is little mention of the variability of illness presentation or of the frequency of occurrence of command auditory hallucinations.

Along these lines, Brown and Muscari are inconsistent in citing references within the body of the text. In several instances throughout the guide, they list specific statistics or data without identifying the source. Although a reference list is included at the end of each chapter, some statements within the body of the chapter are not supported by an identified source.

Despite its limitations, this book may serve as a quick resource for identifying important medicolegal topics that a nurse or other health professional may encounter in providing clinical care. The authors also aptly identify local resources and professional organizations where a provider can turn for more information on select topics.

In summary, the authors accomplish their goal of examining topics in forensic medicine in a concise and easy-to-read format. Nurses and other providers new to the field may benefit from the variety of topics covered. However, for this readership, the book provides little guidance in the practice of forensic psychiatry. That being said, this readership may find it useful and informative to review the findings evident on physical examination and corresponding data collection and documentation associated with physical violence, such as in cases of battery or sexual assault.

#### References

1. Book of the Year Awards 2010: Gerontologic Nursing. *Am J Nurs* 111:67, 2011
2. Brown K and Muscari M: *Quick Reference to Child and Adolescent Forensics: A Guide for Nurses and Other Health Professionals*. New York: Springer Publishing, 2010

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## A Primer on Criminal Law and Neuroscience

Edited by Adina L. Roskies and Stephen J. Morse. New York: Oxford University Press, 2013. 320 pp. \$75.00.

Neuroscience has grown exponentially over the past two decades as a key interdisciplinary field informing behavioral science. Neurolaw has followed suit, as clinicians, lawyers, and philosophers attempt to incorporate the developing understanding of the neural substrates of behavior into current ideas about mind and criminal responsibility. The importance of these advancements was underscored in 2013, when the federal government announced funding for the BRAIN (Brain Research through Advancing Innovative Neurotechnologies) Initiative.<sup>1</sup> Philosophers have spent millennia conjecturing about the human mind, and neuroscience is now poised to expand our understanding of mind and brain. The implications of advances in neuroscience on our conception of

criminal law and responsibility are the subject of *A Primer on Criminal Law and Neuroscience*, edited by Adina L. Roskies and Stephen J. Morse. This volume serves as a much-needed overview for nonscientists who are using neuroscience ideas in the courtroom. It is a product of a multiyear Law and Neuroscience Project funded by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

The editors make it clear that, although applications of neuroscience to jurisprudence are on the horizon, the integration of philosophy, law, and science is embryonic. Roskies, Associate Professor of Philosophy, who holds doctorates in neuroscience and philosophy, and Morse, Professor of Psychology and Law in Psychiatry, maintain a balanced approach, free of unrealistic claims. As Morse documents in the introduction, since we do not know the cause-and-effect relationships between brain and behavior, a reasonable entry point for neuroscience has been in mitigation of sentences in criminal cases. The proof of his argument is found in the Supreme Court decisions from 2005 to 2012 regarding sentencing of adolescent offenders (*Roper v. Simmons*, *Graham v. Florida*, and *Miller v. Alabama*). Morse's circumspect comment on the Court's views included, "[T]he citations appear to provide some legitimacy for using neuroscientific evidence in cases involving criminal responsibility, and perhaps more generally" (p xvii).

We appreciate the authors' reflections on how neuroscience, in particular structural and functional imaging, could be used to divert attention from more relevant concerns. Brain imaging is sexy science and may be meretricious in the court room. Even the best trained clinicians can be distracted by imaging findings that appear to speak for themselves. In Chapter 6, Morse and William T. Newsome use both philosophical and legal arguments to introduce potential ways that advances in neuroscience could refine our understanding of criminal responsibility, culpability, and competence. In this carefully constructed chapter, the authors present legal background and correlate it with respect to neuroscientific questions. It is essential reading for forensic psychiatrists. The authors articulate a key message of the text: association is not causation and causation is not an excuse. Further, they make and support the point that causation alone is not legally or morally mitigating.

Overall, the book is elegantly constructed, with each chapter broken into usable sections that make for both a good read over coffee and an easy reference