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Book Reviews: Technical Books Section

...EXCELLENT! OUTSTANDING!! ...I would imagine that this encyclopedia would be very useful to medical examiners, coroners, police personnel, prison medical officers, lawyers, judges and other legal personnel, healthcare professionals involved in medico legal matters, prison nurses, sexual assault nurse examiners and custody nurses. However so wide is its range and scope, that I would heartily recommend it to every medical and legal practitioner, if only for broadening one's horizons of medico-legal knowledge...

Wiley Encyclopedia of Forensic Science (5 volumes), 1st Edition, edited by Allan Jamieson and Andre Moenssens, Hard bound, 7.5" x 10" (includes bibliographic references and index).
John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., The Atrium, Southern Gate, Chichester, West Sussex PO 19 8SQ, England, UK, 3104 pages, illus., bibliog., Author and Subject index.
ISBN-10: 0470018267, ISBN-13: 978-0-470-01826-2. Publication date: June 30, 2009.

Volume 1 - From "Abuse of the elderly" till "Bullet: Identification" - (lvi + page 1 till page 430)

Volume 2 – From "Case Assessment and Interpretation" till "Eyewitness Testimony" - (lvi + page 431 till page 1080)

Volume 3 – From "Facial Comparison" till "Luminol" - (lvi + page 1081 till page 1656)

Volume 4 – From "Malingering" till "Quality Systems: Toxicology" - (lvi + page 1657 till page 2230)

Volume 5 – From "Radiocarbon Dating" till "Young Offenders" - (lvi + page 2231 till page 2805) including Glossary (18 pages – pages 2683 till 2700) author index (5 pages– pages 2701 till 2705) plus subject index (99 pages– pages 2707 till 2805)

List of editors and editorial advisory board, Foreword by The Honorable Haskell M. Pitluck, Preface, Abbreviations and acronyms, The International System of Units (SI), Guide to Legal Citations, list of contributors and contents (of all five volumes) appear in each volume

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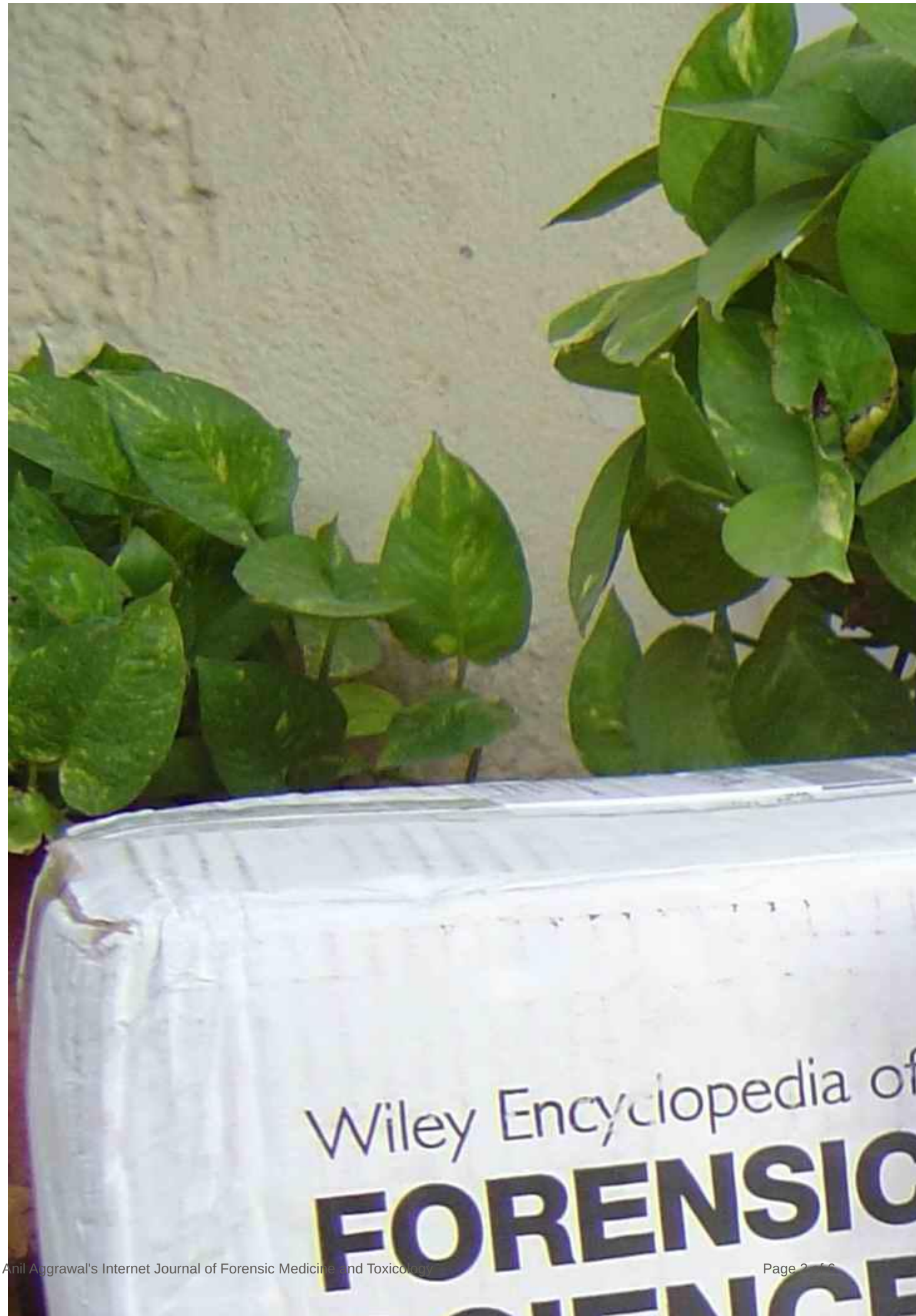
Wiley Encyclopedia of
FORENSIC

Haven’t we all secretly wished for some single stop source of all the latest information on forensic science and medicine? Well, your wishes have now been answered by Wiley. It has come out with an entirely new 5-volume set on virtually everything there is to know on forensic science. The encyclopedia came to the journal office in the morning; I have been going through it for almost eight hours now. The more I dwell through it, the more I realize this is the encyclopedia we have all been waiting for.

Forensic science has grown rapidly in last few years. With the coming of information technology, internet and all related technologies, new ways of crime have come to the fore and forensic science has had to keep pace with these. New information is regularly being reported in journals specially devoted to forensic sciences, but the information is scattered. This needs to be integrated, synthesized and co-related with other pieces of information. The encyclopedia does this with great élan.

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Most essays in the encyclopedia have been illustrated with educative photographs such as this. This pi
essay "Blunt Force Trauma" (vol 1, page 408), and shows subcutaneous emphysema of the face in a traff



This has been a massive project for Wiley as anyone can see. There are two editors-in-chief – both of international repute, thirteen editors, 335 contributors, and all of them have worked hard for several years to produce this excellent work. There are more than 500 entries, each ranging from 500 to 5000 words (depending upon the importance of the topic). These are spread over more than 3100 pages in five volumes. The entries belong to such diverse fields as behavioral sciences, biological sciences, criminalistics, digital evidence, multimedia and engineering, DNA analysis of biological fluids, fire and explosives, investigation & law enforcement, law, medicine, statistics, toxicology and trace evidence.

A look at some of the entries tells us the amazingly vast scope of this encyclopedia. We find entries on topics as diverse as accreditation, airbags, alcohol, Battered Spouse Syndrome, Bayesian Networks, Biometric Devices, Bomb-Pulse Dating, Capacity to Waive Miranda Rights, Death Penalty and Age, Elder Abuse, Footwear and Foot Impressions, Guardianships of Adults, Handwriting and Signatures, Image Processing and Analysis, Jury Instructions on Expert Testimony, Medical Malpractice, Odontology, Paper Analysis, QiaAmp, Temporary Insanity, Whole Genome Amplification and Y-Chromosome Short Tandem Repeats.

All essays are lucidly written with good explanations. Editors have taken care to engage the best experts to write the topics. Many topics have been written by multiple writers which has helped to produce better chapters by drawing upon the experiences of several experts.

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Most essays are illustrated by color pictures and diagrams. The aim is to make the topics very lucid and clear.

The topics are so well written that even an uninitiated can well understand the topic. An example may suffice. As a forensic pathologist, I have never been able to understand Bayes theorem and its relevance to forensic science very clearly. However this encyclopedia made the concept quite clear in my mind.

This encyclopedia may well be designated as the ultimate reference source for every imaginable query related to forensic medicine. Forensic and legal medicine has traditionally been defined as the use of medical knowledge for assisting law and administration of justice. This encyclopedia goes ahead and touches topics which many of us would classically include in criminology, law, forensic science, computer science or even sociology. This is an excellent feature, as it is not always possible to divorce forensic medicine from these allied specialties. Topics such as Aggression, Autoradiograph, Bayesian Networks, Civil Commitment, Demonstrative Evidence, Explosions, Nuclear Forensics, Parental Alienation, Pharmacogenomics, PowerPlex, Radiology, Speaker Recognition and Wildlife fall in these categories.

Another illustrative picture from this encyclopedia - this time from a topic related more to forensic sc
Collection and Preservation: Casting" (vol 2, page 966), and shows dental stone mix being poured into in



Most entries in the encyclopedia are accompanied by full color photographs of high quality. The index comprises of a total of 99 pages – a mini booklet in itself. Aided by a contents list, and extensive cross-references, this index serves as a very powerful tool to help readers to find their way through this encyclopedia.

The encyclopedia incorporates some so-called “satellite topics” also. This reviewer for instance thoroughly enjoyed reading a chapter entitled “Parenting: Assessment of Capacity” (vol 4, pages 1989-2001). Written by Paul Andrews of USA, a known authority in this field, this chapter gives as many as 81 references, and deals with such topics as the effects of maltreatment and treatment interventions with parents. A number of related legal cases are given [Griswold v. State of Connecticut (1965), South Carolina Department of Social Services v. the Father and the Mother; In the interest of the child (1988)]

This is an excellent and indispensable encyclopedia. Some encyclopedias of forensic science and forensic medicine have been published before, but they have gone out of date, and we all could do with a new and up-to-date information on this subject. It is virtually a goldmine of information.

I would imagine that this encyclopedia would be very useful to medical examiners, coroners, police personnel, prison medical officers, lawyers, judges and other legal personnel, healthcare professionals involved in medico legal matters, prison nurses, sexual assault nurse examiners and custody nurses. However so wide is its range and scope, that I would heartily recommend it to every medical and legal practitioner, if only for broadening one’s horizons of medico-legal knowledge.

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Editor's recommendation. This book is recommended by the editor.