

Revista Brasileira de Odontologia Legal – RBOL

ISSN 2359-3466

<http://www.portalabol.com.br/rbol>



Classic Book Review - *Revisão de Livro Clássico*

TITLE: A COLOUR ATLAS OF FORENSIC DENTISTRY

Authors: Whittaker DK, MacDonald DG

Publisher: Wolfe Medical Publications Ltd, London.

Year (Edition/Pages): 1989 (1st Ed./134p).

Language: English.

Reviewed by:

Ademir Franco. Professor, Department of Therapeutic Stomatology, Institute of Dentistry, I.M. Sechenov First Moscow State medical University, Moscow, Russia. franco.gat@gmail.com.

THE AUTHORS

By the release of “A colour atlas of Forensic Dentistry” (Figure 1), in 1989, Dr. Whittaker and Dr. MacDonald were Readers in Oral Biology and Oral Pathology at the University of Wales College of Medicine and at the University of Glasgow, respectively. The authors contributed to the development of Forensic Dentistry with studies mostly spread into the scientific community during the 70's, 80's and 90's. Dr. Whittaker, more specifically, published several articles in the most diverse fields in Forensic Dentistry. His work was evidently marked by his interest in promoting formal training in Forensic Dentistry¹ and also encouraging teaching of Forensic Dentistry to undergraduates². Similarly, Dr. MacDonald also dedicated part of his career to Forensic Dentistry. Most of his articles in the field were designed to investigate the bitemark evidence. His name also can be found in many scientific articles focused in Stomatology and Pathology. Together, both professionals participated as experts in important cases in Court (i.e. Torgersen's case)³.

The combination of knowledge and casuistics, presented by Drs. Whittaker and MacDonald, culminated in a very illustrative atlas used nearly for 30 years in the education of forensic dentists worldwide – a classic reference that remains mostly contemporary.

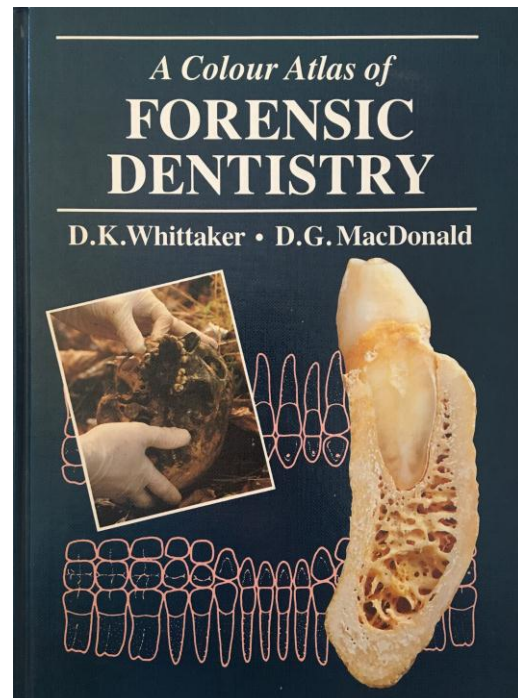


Figure 1 – “A colour atlas of Forensic Dentistry” book cover.

OVERVIEW

“A colour atlas of Forensic Dentistry” is presented with hard cover and high-quality pages.

Fulfilling the authors' interest in promoting Forensic Dentistry to students and enthusiasts, the book is a compilation of several topics of Forensic Dentistry (Table 1).

Table 1 – Book chapters

Addressed topics
1. The scope of Forensic Dentistry
2. Equipment and examination of the body
3. Post-mortem procedures
4. Tooth status and arrangement
5. Tooth restorations
6. The bones of the skull
7. The soft tissue
8. Age determination from teeth
9. Full dentures
10. Partial dentures and orthodontic appliances
11. Laboratory procedures
12. Ante-mortem records and comparisons
13. The mass disaster
14. Bite marks in flesh
15. Bite marks in food and miscellaneous materials
16. Archeological evidence

The several topics addressed in the book are distributed within 134 pages. The idea of compiling such many topics is justified in the preface. More specifically, the book is apparently designed to attend the needs and enthusiasm of professionals of Dentistry, Law and Police organizations.

It is important to highlight that the authors greatly succeeded in designing an atlas for their audience. In general, the core idea of an atlas relies in properly illustrating the (forensic) casuistics to those who seek for incipient and initial knowledge in a specific field.

Undergraduates, graduate students in the early training, general clinicians, and Law and Police professionals may benefit from a clear reading and understanding of some of the fields in Forensic Dentistry.

CHAPTERS

Differently to most of the books in Forensic Dentistry, “A colour atlas of Forensic Dentistry” has unusual titles given to each chapter.

The first three chapters consist of a contextualization of Forensic Dentistry. In summary, the authors introduce some of the fields that are presented briefly and illustrated along the book.

In chapters 4 and 7, the authors explore their knowledge of Stomatology (Oral Medicine) in an interface with Forensic Dentistry. In these topics they highlight the importance of distinctive clinical features, such as transposed and “malshaped” teeth, in Forensic Dentistry.

From a clinical point of view, chapters 5, 9 and 10 are considerably less complex than the others. These chapters explain and illustrate easily to laypersons⁴ the different types of dental restorations and materials, dentures and orthodontic appliances and their contribution to human identification. Similarly, chapter 6 brings a quick anatomy class of bone morphology from especial structures in children and adults.

Chapter 8 highlights the book with a selection of high-quality figures – especially those from human teeth in the early stages of development. This chapter gives an overview of the parameters potentially considered for age estimation in children, adolescents and adults.

Chapter 11 confirms that the authors were ahead of their time. High-tech laboratory procedures with forensic application are described, such as the biochemical methods for accurate age estimation. Special attention should be given to figure #184 – a microscopic section of a pink tooth.

In the next chapter, the authors reach the laypersons once more with explanations of dental charting, sources of antemortem data and comparison of data. The most interesting finding in this chapter is the simulated comparison of odontograms registered by different professionals. In this context, the authors highlight the limitations and difficulties of such approach in human identification.

In chapter 13, mass disaster and disaster victim identification (DVI) are briefly presented. The figure selection includes a set of mass disasters in the sea and fire, as well those caused by men.

Chapters 14 and 15 addresses bitemark evidence and show a set of figures that illustrate the criminal casuistics in children and adults. Differently to the other chapters, the pictures of bitemarks could be enlarged for a better and more detailed view of the injuries.

At chapter 16, the authors conclude their book with archeological applications of Forensic Dentistry and explore the alterations in teeth induced by the environment.

By the end of the 286 figures, “A colour atlas of Forensic Dentistry” consolidates the work of Drs. Whittaker and MacDonald. Thirty years after release, the book remains a source of information to those who search for initial knowledge in Forensic Dentistry.

REFERENCES

1. Whittaker DK, Brickley MR, Evans L. A comparison of the ability of experts and non-experts to differentiate between adult and child human bitemarks using receiver operating characteristics (ROC) analysis. *Forensic Sci Int.* 1998; 92(1):11-20.
2. Whittaker DK. The teaching of forensic odontology to the undergraduate. *Br Dent J.* 1971; 131(5):199-200.
3. Senn DR, Stimson PG. *Forensic Dentistry*. 2nd ed. Boca Raton: CRC Press; 2010.
4. Rouse DA. A colour atlas of forensic dentistry. *J Clin Pathol.* 1990; 43(4):351.