

**KOVÁČ, PETER ET AL.: SÚDNE LEKÁRSTVO
[FORENSIC MEDICINE]. WOLTERS KLUWER, 2025**

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In 2025, the Slovak book market was enriched by a scientific publication entitled *Súdne lekárstvo [Forensic Medicine]*, prepared by distinguished experts. In many respects, the work exhibits attributes of uniqueness, as it offers a high-quality and comprehensive perspective on this traditional yet exceptionally fascinating medical discipline, which is closely intertwined with law and other fields. Particular appreciation must be given to the integration of medical knowledge with legal practice, as well as to the strong emphasis placed on objectivity and the scientific approach, both of which are indispensable in this area. The text clearly explains the importance of forensic medicine in the investigation of criminal offences, the determination of causes of death, and the assessment of bodily harm, while also highlighting its role in protecting individual rights and in the pursuit of justice.

It can be said with great deal of certainty, that the issues addressed in the publication will the issues addressed in the publication will always remain in the focus of legal practitioners, academics, and the general public alike. Therefore, it is necessary to acknowledge the substantial contribution made by the authors in the preparation of this work, particularly in the context of updating knowledge in comparison with the earlier publication from 2005. It is evident that the authors reflect the development of forensic sciences over recent decades and complement classical forensic medicine with perspectives drawn from clinical forensic medicine. As a result, the text appears modern and responsive to the needs of contemporary practice.

The publication is scholarly in nature, systematic and clearly structured. The emphasis on an interdisciplinary approach and on ethical principles both of which are crucial to the practice of this profession is also highly commendable. The breadth of topics, ranging from autopsies and toxicology to the assessment of injuries, provides the reader with a comprehensive understanding of the practical functioning of the discipline.

Overall, the publication may be evaluated as a valuable and beneficial source of information for students as well as professionals from various fields who wish either to orient themselves within the area of forensic medicine or to deepen their existing knowledge.

The scientific monograph comprises more than seven hundred pages, indicating an exceptionally detailed overview of the subject matter. The authors' aim was to provide

a comprehensive perspective on forensic medicine, its methods, and its practical applications. An attentive reader will undoubtedly note that the work addresses not only classical forensic medicine but also clinical forensic medicine. This aspect may therefore be unequivocally regarded as an added value of the presented scientific work, reflecting the authors' many years of experience in their own forensic practice. At the same time, the authors' statements are supported by extensive literature, predominantly foreign sources, within the relevant disciplines. The partial presentation of references at the end of each chapter may also be considered clear and reader-friendly.

In order to achieve the desired comprehensiveness of the scientific text, the authors employ a deductive method in the introductory chapters, proceeding from the general to the specific. This is evidenced by chapters devoted to the history of forensic medicine, forensic medicine in Slovakia, forensic medicine *in genere*, and the conceptual framework of the discipline as such. From the fourth chapter onward, distinct thematic areas inseparably linked to the central topic of the scientific text are identified. One such area is human death, which is associated with numerous legal events envisaged by the domestic legal order. An integral part of this discussion includes agony and its forensic significance, post-mortem changes, and procedures following death, all of which are examined in light of regulations governing health care, such as legislation on health insurance companies or funeral services.

Subsequently, the authors chose to include a chapter devoted to autopsy and its extensive medical as well as legal significance. The trajectory of inquiry then moves toward the assessment of injury vitality, as one of the crucial questions that law enforcement authorities, in cooperation with physicians, must address is, whether a particular injury occurred during the victim's lifetime or was inflicted post-mortem. This is followed by chapters dealing with mechanical injuries, injuries to individual parts of the body, gunshot wounds, fundamentals of ballistics and specific cases of firearm effects, non-lethal weapon systems and their effects, as well as further chapters addressing injuries caused by explosions, bite injuries, the effects of decreased or increased temperatures on the human body, and a specific chapter devoted to the effects of altered atmospheric pressure, electrical injuries, and the effects of radioactive radiation.

From the twenty-second chapter onward, the focus shifts to asphyxia as another possible mechanism of death that requires expert clarification. The task of the forensic physician is to determine whether asphyxia occurred, how it arose, and under what circumstances.

Traffic-related injuries are also addressed in this scientific work, spanning several dozen pages. The central topic of the twenty-fourth chapter are falls from a height and on level ground, followed by a special topic concerning damage caused by acids and alkalis. The fundamentals of forensic toxicology, together with forensic alcoholology, constitute further chapters that analyse secured evidentiary material such as tablets, powders, or liquids of unknown origin, as well as analyses of plant parts, fungi, and animals in connection with examinations of samples taken from the human body. Forensic alcoholology focuses on the effects of alcohol, in any chemical form, on the human organism, examining in particular the metabolism (biotransformation) of ingested alcohol and its kinetics within the body.

Pregnancy and childbirth from a medico-legal perspective represent another thematic area, followed by a chapter devoted to abuse, maltreatment, and neglect of persons. The reader is then introduced to the examination of the bodies of living persons, while a separate thirty-first chapter is dedicated to rape, sexual violence, and sexual abuse.

The work also includes a chapter addressing the fundamentals of identification, whether of living persons, deceased individuals, or their remains. The topic of starvation as a cause of death although very rare under local conditions and more typical of economically underdeveloped countries has likewise found its place within the thematic scope of the publication.

The presented text further addresses the feigning of health disorders, or the deliberate minimisation or concealment of symptoms of an actual illness, in a chapter entitled *Simulation and Dissimulation*. One of the final chapters is devoted to non-invasive imaging methods in forensic medicine and expert practice, followed by chapters on the fundamentals of anthropology as well as forensic psychiatry and psychology. The concluding chapter focuses on the fundamentals of medical law, in which the authors devote more than one hundred pages to detailed discussions of specific issues such as the rights and obligations in the provision of health care, patient information and possible errors therein, informed refusal, medical confidentiality, medical documentation, transplantation and blood collection, the liability of health-care providers and medical professionals, and compensation for pain and diminished social participation. The chapter also draws attention to frequently discussed topics such as euthanasia and the role of the physician as a witness, suspect, or expert.

In view of the above, it is an indisputable fact that the structure of the work provides sufficient space for a comprehensive, detailed, and balanced treatment of the subject matter. It is evident that the authors invested considerable effort in the preparation of the work and managed to produce high-quality results, successfully conceiving the key exposition in a manner that is clear, engaging, and professionally sound.

After a careful study of the monography, it is necessary to conclude that the authors have dealt convincingly with this demanding subject matter at a very high professional level. The work presents a unique and precise treatment of aspects interconnected across medical, legal, and social sciences.

The appeal of the publication is further enhanced by the inclusion of diagrams, tables, and not least, illustrations, which significantly contribute to a better understanding and greater clarity of such a demanding subject.

In light of the above, the reviewed monograph by the leading author, Assoc. Prof. JUDr. MUDr. Peter Kováč, PhD. et PhD., and the collective of co-authors demonstrates, high potential for use in legal practice as well as among students of law and medicine, physicians, lawyers, and other professionals in the field of forensic sciences, who seek to expand and deepen their knowledge in the discipline of Forensic medicine.

Despite its undeniable strengths, the publication would benefit in certain sections from a more extensive development of its applied dimension. The exposition is at times predominantly descriptive and focused on a systematic summary of knowledge, while a broader discussion of practical interpretative challenges, borderline situations, and interdisciplinary aspects – particularly in the context of cooperation with law enforcement authorities and judicial practice – remains rather outlined than elaborated in detail. It would also be beneficial to devote more space to model cases or examples from decision-making practice, which would allow for a closer connection between the theoretical foundations and their practical application. Given the conceptual focus of the publication, this is to some extent understandable; however, a more detailed elaboration of these aspects could further enhance its usefulness in clinical, forensic expert, and educational practice. From a pedagogical perspective, readers might additionally benefit from concise summaries or overviews of key points at the end of individual chapters.

Last but not least, we are convinced that the publication is suitable for a broad spectrum of readers fascinated by medico-legal topics, which constitute an integral component of the proper functioning of the legal system and justice in society. In this regard, the authors' work may be regarded as a valuable source of information.

In conclusion, it may be stated that the authors have succeeded in creating a publication that can undoubtedly be described as unique of its kind; its above-standard quality has no equivalent to date within the Czech Slovak context.