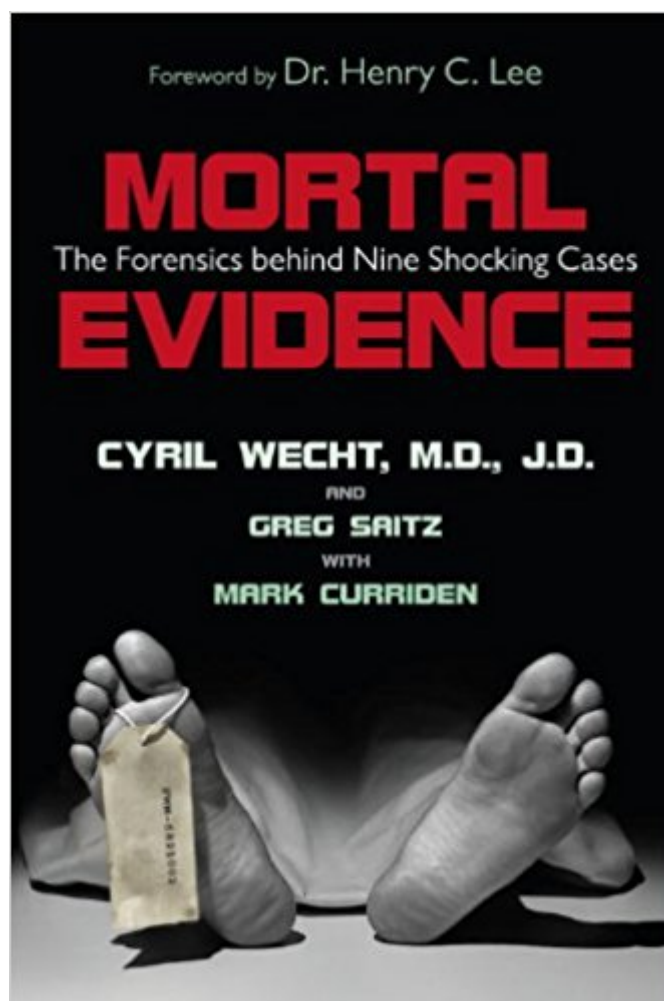




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Mortal Evidence: The Forensics Behind Nine Shocking Cases



Synopsis

A lifeless newborn baby is found discarded in a motel Dumpster. Authorities quickly arrest the infant's teenage parents, charging them with murder. Did Amy Grossberg and Brian Peterson, in fact, murder their own baby? Tammy Wynette died suddenly at a relatively young age, and yet no autopsy was performed? Was someone trying to hide the real cause of death? Did Sam Sheppard (later dubbed "The Fugitive" based on a television series) really kill his wife? And if not, who committed the murder? Things are not always as they appear, as world-renowned forensic pathologist Dr. Cyril Wecht shows in this riveting behind-the-scenes look at nine famous cases. In the nationally known baby case involving Amy Grossberg and Brian Peterson, Dr. Wecht reviews the evidence and comes to a startling conclusion. In fascinating detail, he demonstrates how the tools of forensic pathology often uncover murky, long-hidden secrets that crack seemingly unsolvable crimes. Writing in the first-person Dr. Wecht leads you into the heart of the investigation, focusing each chapter on a single engrossing drama. He reveals the most startling evidence that shows why JonBenet Ramsey's killer most likely came from within her home, why O.J. Simpson probably had an accomplice in the murder of Nicole Simpson and Ron Goldman, shocking revelations about Robert Berdella's grisly torture and sex-abuse crimes against young men, and many intriguing facts about other infamous cases. If you find the fictional plots of such dramas as C.S.I. exciting, you will be amazed by the true stories told by Dr. Wecht, with the help of two top-flight veteran reporters, Greg Saitz and Mark Curriden, in this amazing real-life thriller. As this intriguing page-turner proves, the science of forensic pathology has changed the face of detective work forever.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In this review of nine of his cases, pathologist Wecht gives readers a glimpse into the dark secrets that only the police, lawyers and criminals know about some of America's most intriguing murder cases in recent memory. The prose is crisp, and Wecht, writing with crime reporter Saitz and legal writer Curriden, does an admirable job of explaining technical procedures and scientific evidence in layman's terms. While Wecht's forensic expertise helps shed some light on what really happened in this collection of solved and unsolved cases, the book as a whole points out that forensics is not an infallible method for determining who committed a certain crime. For instance, Wecht's review of the Grossberg and Peterson case (two college freshmen accused of murdering their baby in 1996), on which he consulted for Grossberg's defense, demonstrates the different conclusions that doctors can reach from studying the same autopsies. Furthermore, in two of the high-profile stories mentioned in the book, the O.J. Simpson and JonBenet Ramsey cases, the limitations of forensic science are exposed. Having viewed autopsy records in both cases, Wecht does have compelling theories about who committed these headline-making crimes, but his educated guesses are not proof enough to put anyone behind bars. Still, while some of the cases in this volume are still unsolved, the inherent life-and-death dramatics in each of Wecht's reviews will certainly catch the eye of those who like a good murder mystery or fancy themselves armchair detectives. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

"Dr. Cyril Wecht has brilliantly fused his skills as a forensic pathologist, attorney and author to show how the world of forensic science is used and misused by prosecutors, defense attorneys, police and expert witnesses. Mortal Evidence is a primer on how the criminal justice system really works."-Dr. Michael M. Baden, Forensic Pathologist and former Chief Medical Examiner, New York City
"Wecht is a master. Whether you agree or disagree with his conclusions - regarding Jon Benet Ramsey, Ted Binion, Sam Sheppard or OJ Simpson - you ignore his findings at great peril. In Mortal Evidence, Wecht brings back the dead and has them testify from the grave."-Alan Dershowitz, Harvard Law School
"Each case leaves a chilling feeling as Dr. Wecht examines the footsteps of what each killer or killers may have done in some of America's most notorious crimes ... As always, Dr. Wecht finds the clues that others overlook."-Greta Van Susteren, Host of Fox News Channel's "On the Record"

I really enjoyed this book. These are some VERY INTENSE real life cases from acclaimed Forensic Pathologist Cyril Wecht. I'm a science geek and this satisfies that urge also while telling these stories in such detail that you feel like you are there among the research team. I truly enjoyed the book and can't wait to get on my next Cyril Wecht page turner. The man knows his stuff. He is a Forensic Pathologist and Chief State Coroner in Pennsylvania, A Professor Of Anthropology and Forensics, as well as an Attorney and I'm sure I'm missing something. However, I have followed his career and teachings for years and love his books. And this is one of the best ones.

A well-documented book on nine high profile and controversial true crimes in the USA. Written in gruesome detail, the style is at times pedantic, but one would imagine this is an essential quality for a forensic scientist who would need to be meticulous down to the last hair. There's also personal anecdotes (e.g. the information that the author doesn't gamble) and prejudices (e.g. the author's overt judgement on beauty pageants for little girls) which, at times, detracted from the overall professionalism of his fact-reporting. Clearly a strong personality, who enjoys the limelight, Dr Wecht's comprehensive reporting of these cases provides interesting research background and information.

Cyril H. Wecht. *Mortal Evidence: The Forensics Behind Nine Shocking Cases* Forensic pathology investigates a small proportion of deaths whose cause is difficult to determine. According to the author there is a body of clues that can help solve the mystery of not only how a person died, but also how long ago, and in some cases of murder, by whose hand. "Pinpoint bleeding" on the inside of an individual's lower eyelids can be a sign of strangulation. Frothy fluid in the lungs may suggest a drug overdose death in a young adult who shows no signs of heart disease. Those details are critical to a forensic pathologist as he tries to determine the circumstances surrounding a death. After all, the field of forensic pathology is focused on delving into deaths that are violent, suspicious, sudden, unexplained, unexpected, or medically unattended. The forensics behind nine shocking cases including the O.J Simpson trial, casino magnate Ted Binion's case and the Sam Sheppard trial are examined in great detail. However, the author, who is an experienced expert witness admits that there are cases whose causes remain unresolved. This book would be interesting for crime fiction writers and those interested in the role of expert evidence in the legal process.

While the stories Dr. Wecht relays in the book are interesting (for the most part--the O.J. Trial has

become tiresome for me), his ego is somewhat off-putting. Once the reader gets past that aspect, the facts of the cases can be engrossing. I have an intense interest in forensic pathology cases and found the book worth the read. A few misinterpreted medical definitions made me scratch my head (hypertension and high blood pressure being defined as two separate things? Phenergan being defined as a mild pain reliever when it's used for treatment of nausea?), but perhaps that's an editing issue. It made me wonder what other things in this book were inaccurate if some simple medical terms were off. I consider myself a person who likes to read more facts and less drama, so that influences whether I enjoy the reading more or less.

Many of us have read about the cases included in this book; what is fascinating is how wrong things can go in spite of the science of crime. Prestigious MEs can disagree about findings, police, prosecutors and juries can ignore the findings, and innocent people are sent to jail while the guilty go free. For viewers who enjoyed the autopsy series on HBO, this book makes for good reading. It shunts aside the media hype and goes back to both the science and sociology of the cases presented because the author is not only an ME but was at one time a prosecutor. It is an informative but disquieting book for anyone whose faith in the legal system is firm.

I read books on some of the cases in this book . What I liked is Mr. Wecht went into depth in each case and explained why he came to the conclusion he did . I thought he was very detailed but he didn't get boring with it . I will definitely read more of his books !

Interesting, detailed information about famous cases from a medical perspective.

Cyril Wecht doesn't always agree w/some other forensic doctors, and he is usually right on track on his opinions. I loved the chapter on Anna Nicole Smith.

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