



Reviewed Publications

Sexual Assault – A Forensic Clinician’s Practice Guide 2010

Dr Catherine White

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The author states that the aim of this book is to provide a practical guide for clinicians dealing with sexual assault cases with easily accessible information so that this book can be used during the examination process. This aim is definitely achieved but this book is so much more!

Dr Catherine White is currently the Clinical Director of the St Mary’s Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) in Manchester, UK. This was the first SARC in the UK and is still setting the gold standard for other SARCs to aim for.

The book is a high quality loose leafed folder so that updates or local policies and procedures can easily be added. The text is beautifully laid out with tables and appropriate illustrations and to further support the text there are illustrative case studies, key practice points, essential references, and ideas for further reading. There is a section for useful numbers at the back of the book with space for the clinician’s personal area numbers. There are also a number of appendices which include examples of pro formas from St Mary’s SARC and relevant Faculty of Forensic and Legal Medicine (FFLM) documentation.

There are twenty chapters covering such topics as the basic legislation with regard to sexual offences in the UK – this small section could easily be adapted for other jurisdictions internationally; how to deal with the initial request to attend a complainant of sexual assault; the initial assessment with comprehensive detail on capacity, consent and confidentiality; specific history taking in relation to sexual assault cases; and the examination including an excellent section on anatomy with illustrative line diagrams. Other relevant topics in this field such as emergency contraception, post-exposure prophylaxis, sexually transmitted infection, and the psychological effects of sexual assault are well covered.

The chapters on injuries, forensic samples, alcohol and drugs and in relation to writing statements and attending court will be hugely relevant to all forensic physicians not only those involved in sexual assault. The last chapter is entitled supporting clinicians and suggests support structures such as peer review, appraisals, training, mentorship, supervision, and regular team liaison meetings may result in better recruitment, retention and improved clinical standards. These issues are important to all healthcare professionals working in forensic medicine.

I found the section on child examination very useful even though I am not involved in child sexual abuse examinations. This chapter contains vital information on parental responsibility and safeguarding issues. It is essential that all clinicians involved in the care of children are fully aware of recent developments in this field.

In summary this book is essential reading for all those clinicians involved in sexual assault work but it will also be of interest to other healthcare professionals working in the clinical forensic field. One knows when a true expert has written a book because their knowledge and experience ensure that the content is unambiguous and authoritative.

The author Dr Catherine White has been at the forefront of her field for some years now and it is clear she has a wealth of experience, has learnt from this experience, reflected and refined her practice, and is now using her knowledge, skills and attributes to educate forensic clinicians of the future - a true master in her field.

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