Forensic Gynaecology

This comprehensive book covers the care of victims of sexual and domestic violence. Containing much practical advice – including writing legal reports and court skills, and issues of consent and capacity – the content highlights throughout the need to provide good-quality care to victims, not just for successful prosecutions but, more importantly, for the sake of the victim’s mental and physical health. There are chapters on important topics such as child sexual exploitation, female genital mutilation, male victims, training and psychological issues. The content covers the syllabi for DFCASA, LFFLM, MFFLM(SOM) Part 2 and the RCOG ATSM in forensic gynaecology.

The readership includes gynaecologists, sexual health doctors and nurses, genitourinary medicine doctors and nurses, emergency medicine doctors and nurses, midwives, counsellors and psychologists who work with victims, paediatricians, forensic doctors and nurses, specialist police officers and lawyers and those working in sexual assault referral centres and independent sexual violence advisers.

Maureen Dalton specializes in forensic gynaecology and has been involved with the development of the RCOG’s ATSM in ‘Forensic gynaecology’. She also chaired the development of the Diploma in the Forensic and Clinical Aspects of Sexual Assault run by the Faculty of Forensic and Legal Medicine, London, UK. She is the Clinical Lead Advisor to SW SARC Commissioning.
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Forensic Gynaecology

Advanced Skills Series

Edited by
Maureen Dalton
Clinical Lead Advisor to the South West Sexual Assault Referral Centre
Commissioning, UK
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Contributors

Christine Bassindale  FFFLM DMJ
Clinical Lead Medical and Forensic Services, Sexual Assault Resource Centre, Perth, Western Australia, Australia

Helen Beckett  MSc PhD
Deputy Director, The International Centre: Researching Child Sexual Exploitation, Violence and Trafficking, University of Bedfordshire, Luton, UK

Susan J. Bewley  MA MD FRCOG
Professor of Complex Obstetrics, Women's Health Academic Centre, King's College London, UK

James A. Bloomer  LLB
Barrister, Pump Court Chambers, London, UK

Bernadette Butler  FRCOG MFFLM MFSRH
PGDipFLM
Associate Specialist and Sexual Offences Examiner, King's College Hospital, London, UK

Nigel J. Callaghan  LLB LMSSA(Lond) T(GP) FPCert
DipPnMed FFFLM FACLM MFSoc MCIArb
Consultant Forensic Physician/Barrister at Law, Inner Temple, London, UK

Beata Cybulska  MD MSc DipGUM DFRSH MFFLM
Associate Specialist in Sexual Health, Bristol University Hospital NHS Trust, and Clinical Director, 'The Bridge', Sexual Assault Referral Centre, Bristol, UK

Maureen Dalton  FRCOG FFFLM FFSRH
Clinical Lead Advisor, South West Sexual Assault Referral Centre Commissioning, UK

Vicky Evans  LLM FFFLM MRCGP DMJ DFFP
Senior Forensic Physician, St Mary's Sexual Assault Referral Centre, London, and President of Faculty of Forensic and Legal Medicine, Royal College of Physicians, London, UK

Carlene Firmin  MBE BA MSc
Head of MsUnderstood Partnership and Research Fellow, University of Bedfordshire, Luton, UK

Catherine Golding  MRCGP DFCASA DRCOG DFFP
Clinical Lead and Forensic Medical Examiner, Sexual Abuse Assessment Service for Children and Young People, Sexual Assault Referral Centre, Exeter, UK

Janet A. Hall  MRCGP MSc MFFLM
Administrative Forensic Medical Officer, Child Abuse and Rape Enquiry Unit, Police Service of Northern Ireland, Belfast, UK

Kim Hosier  BSc MSw MSc CQSW UKCP
Director, Portsmouth Abuse and Rape Counselling Service, Portsmouth, UK

Caroline M. Jones  MRCGP FFFLM DMJ
Principal Forensic Physician, Sexual Assault and Child Abuse Panel, Safe Place, Merseyside, Liverpool, UK

Nisha Krishnan  MRCOG DFSRH
Speciality Trainee in Obstetrics and Gynaecology, London Deanery, UK

Zoe Lodrick  MSc BA UKCP
Director, Zoe Lodrick Ltd, Waterlooville, UK

Lucy Love  MBBS BSc DFSRH DFCASA MIPM
Clinical Director, G4S Forensic and Medical Services, Great Bardfield, UK

Comfort Momoh  MBE RN RM BSc MSc
African Well Women’s Clinic, Guy’s and St Thomas’s Hospital, London

Mary Newton  HFFFLM
Independent National Forensic Advisor for Rape and Serious Sexual Offences, Caterham, UK
List of contributors

Jason Payne-James LLM MSc FRCS FFFLM FFSSoc DFM
Specialist in Forensic and Legal Medicine, Barts and The London School of Medicine and Dentistry, London, and Forensic Healthcare Services Ltd, Leigh-on-Sea, UK

Karin Piegsa MD MRCOG FFSRH MScSTIs
Consultant in Reproductive Health, Sexual Health Fife, Whyteman’s Brae Hospital, Kirkcaldy, UK

Jean Price DRCOG FRCPCH
Consultant Community Paediatrician, Solent Healthcare NHS, Child and Family Services, Southampton, UK

Amrin Rahuf MRCGP MFFLM DRCOG DFPP
Forensic Physician, Serenity Sexual Assault Referral Centre, Northampton, UK

Helena Thornton MBChB DRCOG DMJ FFFLM
Forensic Physician, St Mary’s Sexual Assault Referral Centre, Manchester, UK

Ian F. Wall FRCP FFFLM FRCGP FACLM MFMLM DMJ DOccMed
Clinical Director, Serenity Sexual Assault Referral Centre, Northampton, UK, and Visiting Professor, Teesside University, UK

Catherine White OBE FFFLM MRCGP FRCOG
DCH DFFP
Clinical Director, St Mary’s Sexual Assault Referral Centre, Manchester, UK

Katherine A. Zakhour BA MBBS
Imperial College, London, UK
Preface

Sexual violence is a topic that is poorly covered in the undergraduate curriculum and it is only just starting to enter the postgraduate curriculum.

According to the Crime Survey of England and Wales 2013, 2% of women and 0.5% of men had experienced some form of sexual assault (including attempts) in the previous year.

The majority of sexual assaults are not reported to the police and domestic or spousal rape is even less commonly reported. We do know, however, that women who are the victims of sexual assault are more likely to use the health service so we, as medical practitioners, will see them in our day-to-day practice. Optimizing the care of the victim of sexual assault is bound to alleviate some of the subsequent health problems that she may experience. As a gynaecologist, I have a duty to try to provide the best healthcare to women. This includes ensuring that the medical needs of the victim of sexual assault are recognized in conjunction with providing support for the victim at all stages of the process of clinical and forensic management.

If we are to improve our response to rape cases we need to improve the levels of communication between the forensic medical examiner, the general practitioner, counsellors, police, Crown Prosecution Service and, not least, the victim herself. It is with this in mind that the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists arranged to hold study days on the topic of forensic gynaecology and has developed an Advanced training skills module (ATSM) on Leadership in the provision of domestic violence and forensic services.

To reflect the needs of all potential sexual offences examiners, this book has a multidisciplinary basis and has been designed to follow the syllabi of the Diploma of Forensic and Clinical Aspects of Sexual Assault (DFCASA), the Membership of the Faculty of Forensic and Legal Medicine (sexual offences medicine) and the ATSM.

There is a continuum involving rape which also includes child sex abuse and domestic violence, child sex exploitation and female genital mutilation, and so these equally unacceptable forms of violence are also discussed. The main focus is on the management of the woman who discloses that she has been raped. The term victim has been used, however at various points along the journey she may be a victim, a patient or a complainant. One of the reasons why this is such a challenging area in which to work is the dual role of the examiner to look after the health needs of the victim at the same time as collecting and often interpreting forensic evidence. We are constantly looking for ways of improving evidence gathering. The forensic examiner is ever mindful of welfare of the victim and yet must fulfill another dual role of remaining impartial, although empathetic, towards to the woman. Female pronouns have been used throughout the text for ease of reading except when the issue was pertinent to the male only. However it is in recognizing that the male is also a victim that there is a new chapter specific to the male victim. Another new chapter in this edition reflects the growing number of older victims.

Finally, I must thank the many people who have helped in this project and especially the chapter contributors. This book would not exist but for the hard work put in by Clare Dunn at the RCOG and then Nicholas Dunton and Jane Seakins at Cambridge University Press. Thanks to email, I could happily work at antisocial hours and they could reply at more sociable times.

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