

reviewer failed to detect any notable omissions. The practitioner is given convenient access to all the forms he needs and to the Rules of Court. Even the addresses and telephone numbers of the registries and offices to which recourse will be needed are included! Perhaps the next edition may also contain some precedents.

Developments in this rapidly changing field of law will make regular updating essential if the book is to retain its value to the student and the practitioner. For this reason it is to be hoped that the text is encoded on a floppy disc. If it is not, the author's task in preparing future editions will be a daunting one.

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Ethics, Legal Medicine and Forensic Pathology by Vernon D. Plueckhahn (Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1983) pp. i-xv, 1-287 (including Index). Price \$39.50, ISBN 0 522 84252 6.

Dr Plueckhahn covers a wide field in this book, examining ethical questions which arise in the daily practice of medicine, describing various techniques useful in forensic medicine and also looking at important social issues. The discussion of medical and social ethics is comprehensive, in several cases leading to suggestions for legislative intervention, either to clarify a position or to remove anomalies. Beyond the examination of the doctor/patient relationship, particularly in regard to consent and confidentiality, Dr Plueckhahn devotes his attention to the more complex ethical problems caused by modern technological advances. This area, known as bioethics, involves such practices as organ transplants, improved means of life support, artificial insemination, *in vitro* fertilization, embryo transfer and genetic engineering. Not only can such activities be questioned on moral and ethical grounds, but the reasonable distribution of community resources must be encouraged. Moral issues predominate when priority of resource allocation is decided. Further, legal problems arise when, for example, a child is conceived after its father's death, or a surrogate mother claims custody of the child she has borne; further, should the law recognize a new proprietary interest in an unimplanted embryo? Dr Plueckhahn sees need for legislative reform in these areas, to control unethical practices, to answer unsettled questions and to provide a system of compensation, should technological advances produce unexpected harmful side-effects.

Legal questions are discussed at length in chapters on human tissue transplantation and the professional liability of doctors. In particular, the difficult issue of consent is treated, in relation to donation of vital organs and actions against doctors for assault arising from surgery. The definition of death contained in the Human Tissue Act 1982 (Vic.) is explained, and tests for ascertaining brain death are described. Ethical and legal issues overlap when the turning off of life-support systems is contemplated; finally, the author looks at the special problems of consent to blood transfusions involving Jehovah's witnesses. Professional negligence is covered in detail.

As well as his investigations of legal and ethical issues, Dr Plueckhahn explains many medical points, but without becoming so technical as to lose his non-medical readers. Thus chapters are devoted to the most common causes of sudden death and their determination in autopsy; these include wounds, road accidents, asphyxia, hypothermia, hyperthermia, electrocution and poisoning. Legal problems are found here too; for example, a doctor may need to decide whether a body found in the ocean was dead before it entered the water. The techniques for identification of corpses are discussed in the final chapter of the book.

Chapters on sexual offences and abortion give clear statements of the law in Australian jurisdictions, and explain the role of the medical practitioner in these areas. Inconsistencies in laws concerning sexual offences are indicated, with suggestions for reform. There is also an excellent chapter on the social,

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medical and legal aspects of alcohol, covering the effects of alcohol, associated problems, its metabolism and detection after death and its involvement in the law, both in road laws and the defence of intoxication. The author seems to find the position of the High Court in *R. v. O'Connor*¹ socially unacceptable, and hints at the need for Parliament to intervene here.

Only occasionally does the book become technical; this is in the medical area, and to be expected. Good background chapters are included on the legal system, and in general the book presents an excellent overview without needless complication. Nonetheless, it may have been advisable to explain some basic medical points; obviously only a limited amount could be covered, but it may have been possible to define medical terms, perhaps in a glossary, for the sake of non-medical readers. Short historical sketches give the book added interest, although some details about sources used here could easily have made this part of the book more useful. In other areas, the references are many and detailed, and the text throughout is lucid and easily read. The book is well set out and contains many colour plates to enhance the text in medical areas. Perhaps closer attention could have been given to some anticipated legislative action and recent enactments; for example, discussion of the effect of the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (Vic.) on accessibility to patients' records and files in public hospitals could have been included.

The ethical, medical and legal aspects of Dr Plueckhahn's subject are covered well, and successfully related to each other. The book should be very useful to doctors and lawyers, who can each benefit from a better understanding of the work of the other profession. Apart from being invaluable for these reasons, this book will be of considerable use to students and various professional people, as well as holding great interest to the general reader wishing for a clearer perspective of modern problems in legal medicine.

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A Modern Introduction to International Law by Michael Akehurst (4th edition George Allen and Unwin (Publishers) Ltd, London, 1982) pp. 1-304. Price \$49.50 (hardback) \$17.95 (paperback) ISBN 0 04 341019 7, 0 04 341020 0.

Dr Akehurst's introduction to international law is now in its fourth edition, but possibly is not yet well known to the audience to which it is directed. Its aim, as the title suggests, is not to become a definitive work, but to accomplish the equally difficult task of producing a concise and easily digestible outline of the intricacies of international law for those approaching the subject for the first time. Here the book is largely successful, partly because of its combination of international affairs and international politics with the law. The topics with which international law has traditionally concerned itself are each addressed and their issues comprehensively outlined. Helpfully, due emphasis is given to those areas of development in international law which are the most relevant to, and, with good fortune, will assist in resolving, contemporary international disputes. Accordingly there is a separate chapter on the self-determination principle, including a valuable discussion of the consequences of violations of the right of self-determination. Dr Akehurst concludes with a rejection of the view put by some Afro-Asian writers that a right of collective self-defence can be lawfully exercised as a basis for intervention by foreign states in wars of national liberation. There is also a brief chapter on air space and outer space law, mentioning the important Article 4 of the Outer Space Treaty, which provides that nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction must not be placed in orbit around the earth.

The book's claim to being a modern introduction to the subject is not entirely substantiated however. Many of the recent decisions are duly noted, such as the Iranian Hostages case,¹ the new British policy of non-recognition of governments, and *Texaco v. Libya*.² But of course textbooks can never hope to

¹ (1980) 29 A.L.R. 449

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¹ *U.S.A. v. Iran* (1980) 19 *International Legal Materials* 553.

² (1978) 17 *International Legal Materials* 1.