

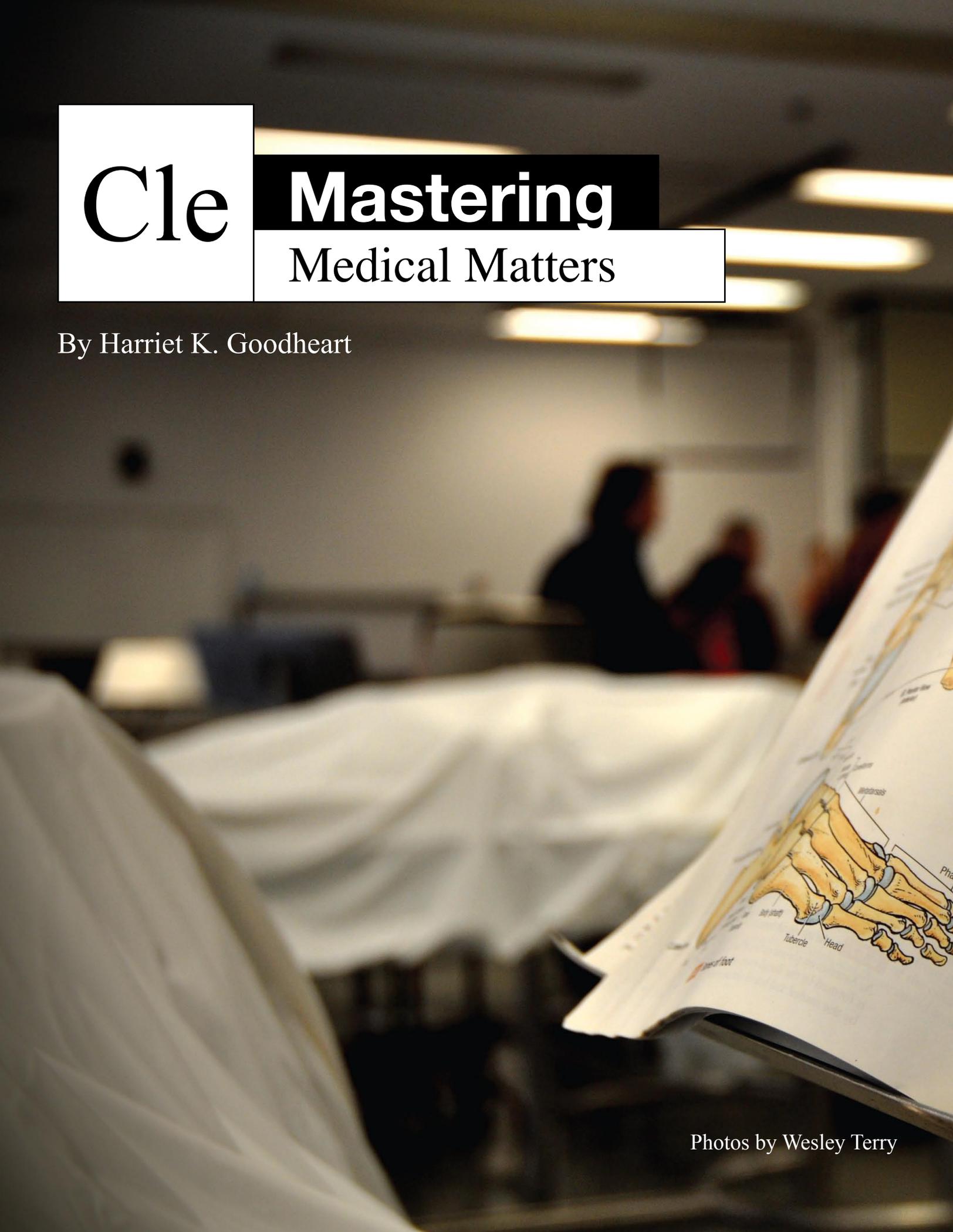
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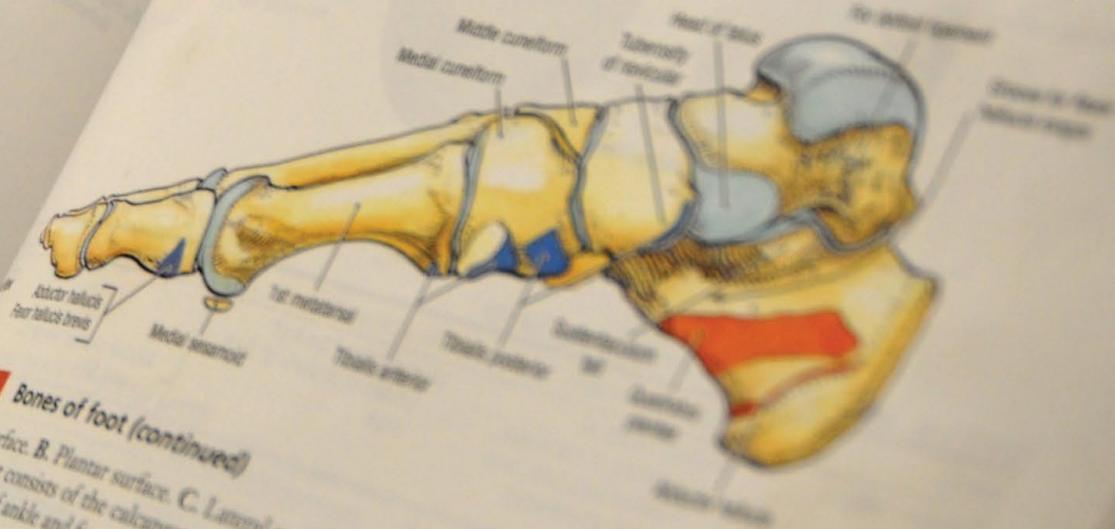
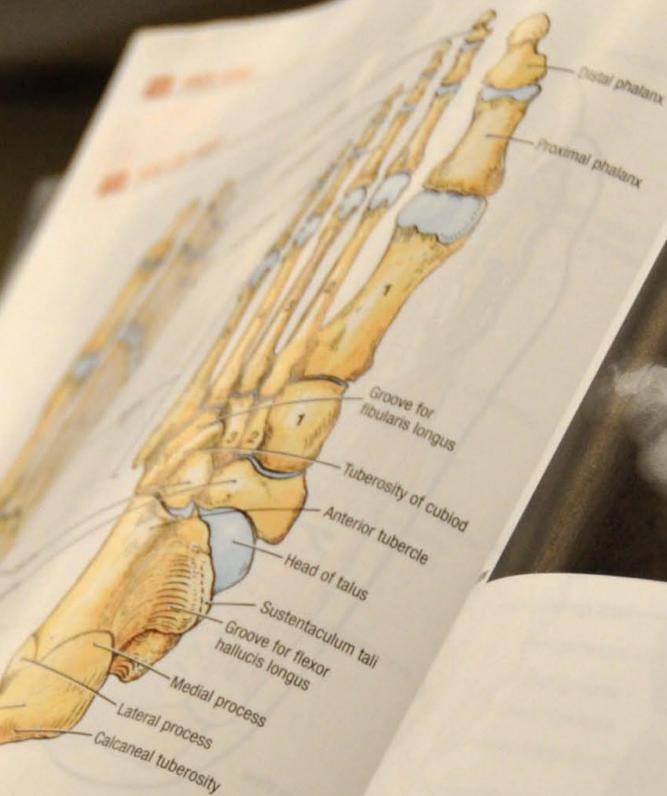
Mastering

Medical Matters

By Harriet K. Goodheart

Photos by Wesley Terry





**5.69** Bones of foot (continued)

A. Dorsal surface. B. Plantar surface. C. Lateral aspect. The lateral part of the longitudinal arch of the foot consists of the calcaneus, cuboid, and fourth and fifth metatarsals. D. Lateral radiograph of ankle and foot. T, talus; Ca, calcaneus; S, sustentaculum tali; C, cuneiforms; Cb, cuboid; MT, metatarsal; TT, tarsal tunnel. E. Medial aspect. The medial part of the longitudinal arch of the foot consists of the calcaneus, talus, navicular, three cuneiforms, and first, second, and third metatarsals.



**W**earing lab coats and surgical gloves, the students circle the cadaver in the anatomy lab, carefully examining vital organs and the muscular skeletal system.

A typical day in the life of a medical student? Yes, but these students intently studying the human body happen to be lawyers and judges. Welcome to Into the Anatomy Lab, a one-day, multi-media continuing legal education course designed to give legal professionals an in-depth understanding of the medical science they regularly encounter in the courtroom.

“So much of what we do in law has a medical base to it,” observes Samuel D. Hodge Jr., a veteran litigator and professor at Temple University, who created the course. “Lawyers focus on the liability side and can be at a disadvantage on the medical side. Now they can acquire the knowledge of the medical issues underlying the legal matters they deal with every day.”

How do you effectively cross-examine a health-care professional? Explain a herniated disc or a torn meniscus to a jury? What exactly is a rotator cuff injury, anyway? For Hodge, chair of the Legal Studies department at Temple and anatomy instructor, the answers to these and other questions on which a case can turn lie in a solid understanding of the complexities of the human body.

The course, one of the Pennsylvania Bar Institute’s mostly highly rated offerings, begins with a morning session in the classroom where Hodge presents “a guided tour of the human body” in a lively, interactive teaching style.

“The building blocks of the human body are not unlike the construction of a house,” Hodge says. “The foundation of the house is its frame, made out of wood; in the body, it’s the skeletal system, made out of bone. Each has its own ‘plumbing system,’ and the fresh air that is distributed through vents and ducts in your home translates to the pulmonary system’s lungs and bronchial tubes in your body.”

The presentation includes state-of-the-art drawings, animations, anatomic models and videos of human dissections that prepare the lawyers for their afternoon visit to the anatomy lab at Jefferson Medical College. There, Hector Lopez, M.D., an assistant professor in the department of Anatomy, Histology and Cell Biology, along with a team of medical students, continue the tour with hands-on instruction utilizing prosected cadavers. Dr. Lopez has reorganized the anatomy lab into a series of stations, each focusing on a different segment of the human body, from the brain to the knee. The lawyers, divided into small groups, move from one station to another, seeing firsthand the workings of the human body, with medical students offering explanations and answering questions.

While the course comprehensively covers skeletal, muscular, endocrine, digestive, respiratory, reproductive, urinary, nervous systems and sense organs, participants with specific interests have the opportunity to “choose their own body part,” as Hodge puts it. Students are encouraged to E-mail Hodge in advance of the course in order to alert him to particular issues a lawyer may be dealing with which in turn allows Hodge and the anatomists to tailor the course accordingly.

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“Being able to hold a human heart and brain in my hand while an anatomist explained the significance of the various body parts has spoiled me,” said Judge Joseph I. Papalini of the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas, who took the course. “I will never look at a color-coded chart of a body part the same way again...I will never forget what I learned.”

“It is the first CLE course I have taken in nearly 25 years that I was disappointed...the course had to end,” noted Richard M. Jurewicz. “It is an experience that will be relived each time I begin preparing for my medical expert’s deposition or trial testimony.”

While the anatomy lab demonstrations led by the medical team give legal professionals an understanding of medical diagnoses and surgical procedures, it is always from a legal perspective, with Hodge keeping the focus on what lawyers

need to know.

“Lawyers are trained to recognize or defeat theories of liability, but most attorneys are not educated in medical matters,” he says. “To level the playing field when it comes to issues of causation and damages, it is vital that attorneys have an understanding of the human anatomy – how it works and what happens when something doesn’t.”

Hodge, who lectures throughout the country and has written more than 150 articles on medical/legal topics, is the author of *Anatomy for Litigators* published by ALI-ABA and honored in 2007 as the best legal textbook by the International Association of Continuing Legal Education. ■

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