on Drug Abuse). It provides a comprehensive directory of facilities, both statutory and voluntary, for those with drug problems. The book contains two useful general chapters written by Dr John Strang, a specialist in drug dependency, and David Turner, a co-ordinator from SCODA. The general chapters include information for relatives, friends of drug users, and addicts themselves on the range of services available, where to obtain help, and what to do if help is not available.

The directory lists voluntary and statutory organisations by county. The book is delightfully simple to use. It has already been widely distributed to general practitioners, Citizens Advice Bureaux, and libraries. It will be an invaluable tool for anyone involved in helping drug abusers.

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Textbook of community medicine in South-East Asia.
Edited by WO Phoon and PCY Chen. (Pp 620; £37.50)

As the opening sentence of the preface makes clear, this is a textbook of community medicine for medical students in South-East Asia, the content of which is appropriate to their environment and circumstances. Under the rubric of community medicine not only is the Royal College of Physicians Faculty of Community Medicine definition used, ie, that branch of medicine which deals with populations or groups rather than individuals, but also included is the concept that associates the term with medicine in the community in contradistinction to hospital medicine. Thus the book attempts to be all embracing in its coverage; 50 authors contribute 53 chapters grouped into seven sections. These sections are: principles of epidemiology and biostatistics; epidemiology and control of diseases; social science and health care; organisation of health care; environmental and occupational health; nutrition; and family health. A section dealing with principles of economics as applied to health care appears to be the only major topic relevant to community medicine that is not covered.

To cope with such a wide range of topics in the space of 600 pages inevitably means that many are covered superficially. The chapter on epidemiological methods comprises a total of 10 pages and in this short space deals with types of epidemiological studies, survey methods, measures of risk and association, mathematical models, and health screening. In contrast, almost the same space is devoted to data processing methods and includes photographs of card punching machines. Such an imbalance and incongruity in coverage detracts from the overall value of the book.

The concepts of prevention, which should be a major preoccupation of those concerned with community health, is glossed over. Screening for disease is not mentioned in conjunction with secondary prevention, and the main example given of secondary prevention is the early diagnosis and prompt treatment of jaundice in the newborn due to glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase deficiency.

As is right and proper, many of the traditional public health topics are included, such as excreta disposal and water sanitation. However, sometimes too much detail is given. When dealing with the treatment of surface water by sand filtration, to quote figures for sand particle size, uniformity coefficient, and filtration rates is surely unnecessary detail for medical undergraduates.

Several good thumbnail sketches are given of many of the communicable diseases but these are marred by inaccuracies or half-truths. Measles is stated to be rare in developed countries but, if it occurs, it is more severe. The acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) is covered in one sentence, which states that in the USA homosexuals are now affected. If the disease is not pertinent to undergraduates in South-East Asia it would be better not to mention it rather than have this half-truth promulgated.

In summary, the book is admirable in its intent to provide, in a single volume, all that the medical undergraduate may need to know about community medicine, but an imbalance and numerous inaccuracies limit its value. Remedial action in the next edition should realise the full potential of the effort put into developing this text.

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