posed by AIDS and HIV infection. It appears that all the participants at the meeting have submitted papers, covering the clinical, epidemiological, immunological, and therapeutic approaches to AIDS in Europe.

This book is essentially a meeting report and, by necessity, publication has been delayed until one year after the meeting. The papers presented have either been published in scientific journals in the meanwhile or have sunk without trace in the interim. There was an International Meeting in Paris in 1986, which has largely bypassed much of the message of this book.

On a positive note, the epidemiology from Europe presents some data from the more obscure corners: seropositivity to HIV in Athenian prostitutes; a 12-year history of serology in Switzerland; epidemiology of AIDS in Milan, etc. However, these data are, in many cases, 18 months out of date, which for such a fast-moving field is unacceptable.

I found tables to be misplaced (Fig 1, p75 belongs on p198, and vice versa), and I was surprised to see myself as second author on a paper I had never seen, and whose contents I found a poor reflection of my own work. If this is an indication of the other contributions, I worry about the general reliability of this book.

I feel this book contains information which is obtainable elsewhere. Clinicians will need more detail, epidemiologists need to be in the present, and immunologists require more rigorous justification of results.

It seems tragic that the EEC should be spending research money on publishing books of this sort when the same money would be better spent in more regular—unpublished—meetings. There are enough publications on AIDS already.

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The geography of non-infectious disease
MSR Hutt and DP Burkitt (Pp 164; figs. £20-00) Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.

In their introduction, Professor Hutt and Dr Burkitt state that this book is intended to fill a gap in the literature on the geographical distribution and causes of non-infectious disease, particularly in the non-Western countries of the world. We are reminded that if it can be demonstrated that there are differences in the incidence or prevalence of a particular disease between population groups living in different geographical areas, socioeconomic circumstances, or cultural backgrounds, and that these observations cannot be explained by diagnostic failure or other bias in the information, it is possible to formulate a hypothesis to explain these differences. Herein lies this book's value to a wide range of readers who are interested in the aetiology of non-infectious diseases in the United Kingdom and the direction in which to plan preventive strategies, as well as to overseas readers. Clinicians as well as community physicians and others interested in the wider aspects of health promotion and medical geographers will find interest in this well presented volume which I found eminently readable. Within its 164 pages it gives a wealth of useful information. The distribution of a variety of non-infectious diseases is described in different populations throughout the world. Each geographical description is followed by an aetiological hypothesis which is compatible with the genetic and/or environmental background of the populations living in particular regions or countries. Thirteen of the chapters treat the non-infectious diseases classified by anatomical system. Pathological as well as clinical manifestations of the diseases are included. One was left with three clear messages after reading this book. Firstly, that although it is generally accepted that most non-infectious diseases are multi-factorial in aetiology, there are two main influences which are responsible for the Western pattern of disease; these are cigarette smoking and the Western diet. Secondly, as elucidated by Sir Richard Doll in his foreword to this book, it may require nothing more abstruse than an ability to examine in an unprejudiced way the features of a society (or social groups within a society) in which the disease has characteristicly occurred, to discover enough about the causation of a disease to enable it to be avoided in the future. Thirdly, that the geographical distribution of disease is one of the more fascinating aspects of medical science, as illustrated by the essential inclusion in any comprehensive work on the subject of Burkitt's lymphoma, named, of course, after one of this book's co-authors.

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The literature on epidemiology of melanoma is large and growing fast; thus there is a useful place for a book offering up-to-date reviews in the subject. This 169-page volume arose from a meeting in Vancouver in 1984 (but includes many 1985 references) and contains
reviews, mainly excellent, of selected studies and topics in melanoma epidemiology. It does not, however, give comprehensive coverage of the subject. The chapters comprise: a short, clear section on pathology; a study of incidence trends in Denmark (but the book does not contain a wider review of secular trends or indeed of most other aspects connected with routine data); excellent concise summaries of three major case-control studies; and a summary of a fourth from the US which the authors agree had methodological problems; a review of occupation and melanoma, which brings together a mine of references; reviews of melanoma and oral contraceptives; and melanoma and pregnancy; a review of epidemiology of fluorescent lights and melanoma, which includes an over four page critique of the most substantial paper supporting an association; a most informative chapter on the physics of fluorescent lights in comparison with solar irradiance; a review of genetic aspects of cutaneous melanoma; preliminary results from a study exploring reproducibility and validity in the clinical diagnosis of non-familial "dysplastic naevi"; and a useful summary of the epidemiology of intraocular melanoma. Helpfully, there is an index. Many of the chapters are well referenced and contain useful information on studies now in progress by the authors or studies which are needed.

Weaknesses of the book? The price is high for the length—almost £40; there are many typographical errors; and there is a certain amount of repetition between chapters. Nevertheless, those already involved or interested in melanoma epidemiology will find here several stimulating presentations and a useful reference source on the topics covered, while others working in epidemiology/community medicine will find clearly and concisely presented a good selection of interesting material about an area of epidemiology where substantial progress is being made and preventive possibilities are starting to emerge.

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This is a useful book. Its contents range widely from a most interesting account of the use of lead since prehistoric times down to a clear account of many of the most recent research studies behind the current debate on possible effects of lead on the performance of children. A major section reviews the literature on sources of lead exposure and covers air, water, food, and paint. Undoubtedly, however, the most valuable section of the book is that which concentrates on the performance of children ("Lead, intelligence, attainment, and behaviour"). This is prefaced by a clear and helpful chapter on methodological and statistical issues. This particular chapter is of such general relevance that the author might be encouraged to publish it separately in a more accessible place. I personally found the chapter on animal studies of little interest and wish that this space had been given to either of the adjacent chapters.

Having said all that, it has to be pointed out that the title is quite misleading. The first section on "Background" is interesting but has little to do with the recent debate. There is a wealth of material summarised clearly and concisely in the middle section on "Sources of lead exposure", but there is hardly a critical comment in these seven chapters. Results are presented with little or no evaluation of the design and methodology of the various studies which generated them.

Again, the final section on "The effects of lead" is far the best with respect to critical evaluation, yet the review stops far short of what one would like to see under the general title "The lead debate". There have been other reviews and while this one is very comprehensive it adds little to what is already available. On the other hand, one would like to have seen an evaluation of the possible lead effect on children's performance against the background discussion of other determinants of IQ. One would also like to have seen some attention given to the likely cost:benefit ratio of action to lower lead levels compared to action directed at other more certain determinants.

The recent lead debate has been a sorry chapter in the dialogue between scientists, the public, and the Government, and while certain pressure groups may claim success, their activities have done nothing to facilitate communication but have increased suspicion on the part of the public and encouraged retreat and isolation on the part of scientists. Surely there are lessons to be learned, and a book which claims the title "The lead debate" would be the place for some of these lessons to be presented. Scientists who write under a title such as this have a duty not just to present their results, but to inform their readers how to evaluate research and prepare them for the next debate.

In summary, the book is clear, concise, and well written. However, it falls far short of expectations generated by the title, and, from a scientific point of view, its tenor is not impressive.

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