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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The lead debate: the environment, toxicology and child health Eds. Lansdown R, Yule W (Pp 286, £14.95) London: Croom Helm, 1986.

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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