Book reviews

British Asians' health in the community. P Karseras, E Hopkins. (Pp 144; £6.50) Chichester: John Wiley, 1987.

This is a well written book by two practising health visitors whose clients in South Glamorgan included families from the Indian subcontinent. It discusses the cultures and life styles of Asians who have settled in the United Kingdom and the implications of these factors for the delivery of health care, particularly preventive health care to the Asian families.

The book contains good first hand practical advice to community health care workers who come into contact with Asian families. I would like to have read more on the elderly and mentally ill, but the authors decided to focus mainly on maternal and child health. However, they do cover important areas such as the admission of children to hospital, the diet of Asians, and the naming systems.

I found Chapter 2 on communications very informative. It deals with issues that District Health Authorities with populations from the Indian subcontinent are trying to address. The roles of professional interpreters, link workers, and advocates are discussed. The disadvantages of using children in the family as interpreters are highlighted. It is recommended that District Health Authorities with sizeable Asian populations should have professional interpreter services.

The authors write with compassion and have succeeded admirably in their intention to provide community health care workers with practical advice on how to translate theory into services that accord with the expectations and life styles of their Asian clients.

The book merits a wider audience than the authors had in mind. It could be strongly recommended to community physicians, planners, and managers whose districts contain populations from the Indian subcontinent. Researchers embarking on work in the Asian community would find in it invaluable practical advice which could make their task easier.

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Current topics in AIDS, Volume 1. M S Gottlieb, D J Jeffries, D Mildvan, A J Pinching, T C Quinn, and R A Weiss (eds) (Pp 313; £25.00) Chichester: John Wiley, 1987.

Any book on AIDS faces the problem of rapid obsolescence. This volume is intended to be the first of a series in which topics not covered in other texts or where coverage in other texts has become out of date will be reviewed.

Of 14 review articles in all, five deal wholly, or in substantial part, with epidemiological findings. Not surprisingly, the degree of overlap between these chapters is considerable, especially between the chapter on risk factors and their implications for prevention (Chapter 2) and that on natural history (Chapter 4). Although the editors state that some overlap is intentional in order that the chapters can be read in isolation, it might have been more helpful, for the epidemiologically minded reader, if this material had been presented in sequence and collated. Chapter 4 is particularly comprehensive and includes useful discussion of the reliability of HIV antibody tests for epidemiological purposes and of the available information on the progression from HIV infection to AIDS, and pinpoints issues yet to be resolved. The chapter on AIDS in Africa in part suffers from the problem of a book becoming out of date rapidly in such a fast moving field. For example, it does not include comment on the evidence of concentration of AIDS cases along the trade routes from Central Africa around Lake Victoria to Mombasa or some of the more recent discussion about the potential role of scarification in transmission. The chapter on the psychosocial impact of the disease provides a useful reminder that the appearance of new diseases and epidemic forms of old ones is not uncommon, draws parallels with the psychosocial impact and public understanding of other diseases throughout history, and includes reviews of health education efforts and their evaluation and a useful brief critique of methods of determining the extent to which behavioural change occurs in response to a public health intervention.

Five chapters have a substantial clinical content. Chapter 3 gives an overview of the spectrum of disease due to HIV infection: a table giving an indication of the frequency of the different conditions would have been useful. Chapter 8 deals with gastrointestinal manifestations, Chapter 9 with infants and children, Chapter 11 with central nervous system involvement, and Chapter 12 is a collection of clinical observations intended to provoke enquiry.

The remaining chapters include an introduction, a chapter on serological testing (Chapter 7), a chapter on the potential value of T cell phenotyping in the diagnosis and management of AIDS (Chapter 10), and chapters on virology (Chapter 5) and immunopathogenesis (Chapter 6).

In conclusion, this volume promises well for a series of reference works that could be taken in academic or clinical libraries. For the epidemiologist unacquainted