mortality patterns recorded in this atlas but it is only in the chapter on "Spatial variations in mortality" (P B West) that these are discussed in any depth.

The validity and reliability of the mortality data are clearly important but receive rather limited attention. Measures of variability are not quoted and only SMRs "within the top tenth" are tabulated. The detection of changes over time are left largely to the eye, a slightly uncertain procedure. Comparisons between maps are difficult and some way of putting them side by side would have been helpful—though doubtless difficult and expensive to provide. The change in geographical boundaries between 1969–73 and 1979–83 compounds the difficulty in making comparisons—but these are hardly the fault of the authors!

In spite of these reservations this is an interesting volume which presents a wealth of data on Scottish mortality patterns. It will be of interest to those concerned both with the causes of disease and the provision of health services. Nor is its interest confined to Scotland—the ideas generated by these geographical patterns are likely to have wider significance. A copy should be made available in every medical reference library.

MARY FULTON
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This book was published as the proceedings of a symposium held to celebrate the centenary of the National Institute of Health in Bethesda, Maryland, in April 1987.

The aim of the symposium was to review progress in research relevant to the care of elderly people and to consider its significance in planning for them. As such the book is an overview of research recently undertaken into the health related aspects of ageing.

The contributors represent some of the best known names in the field and each has presented either a particular study or a general description of his or her work. The contributors are excellent and are added to considerably by the discussions at the end of each section. As such the book would be invaluable to an epidemiologist or planner wishing to obtain a fairly full view of the ageing related issues, especially as the subject is rapidly expanding and likely to have more and more impact upon the care of older people, whether it be the exposure of fallacies about the differences between older and younger people with cancer or the possibilities of reducing the epidemic of age related bone fractures. The references provide the opportunity for a fuller examination of the issues, if that is required.

As is usual with such groups there is some hypothesis building in the discussions, not always borne out by the available facts. The book demonstrates the huge areas of unknown territory in the field and the importance of trying to chart, at least, the main paths. As such the book should act as an important stimulus to researchers, and possibly even a government department or two, to realise the enormous potential for good that such research holds.

NORMAN J VETTER
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The latest volume of the Pigment Cell Series brings together the views of contributors from seven countries on the relationship between pigmented naevi and melanoma. The evidence suggests that control of melanoma is possible and programmes of prevention and early diagnosis are described.

Interest in moles has developed only in the last few years, as a result of the rising incidence of melanoma. Consequently the epidemiological information is fragmentary. Armstrong and English give a clear presentation of this information, while an interesting account of mole surveying in New Zealand makes the reader aware of the need for caution in basing deductions on comparisons between studies by different workers. Overlap between the topics covered is perhaps inevitable in a book of this kind. It enables the reader to discover differing views, most notably on the genetic basis for familial clustering of melanomas and dysplastic naevi, but detracts from the pleasure of reading straight through this short, well produced book. It is a useful source of information and the detailed reports on an enquiry into first symptoms of melanoma in Canada, and public education campaigns in Queensland and Glasgow, will be especially useful for those concerned with health education.

But are intervention programmes certain to prolong lives, to what extent and at what cost? As with any early detection programme a shift towards earlier diagnosis is not sufficient as evidence of true benefit, and survival measurements are confounded by lead time bias and the possibility that cases which would have regressed spontaneously may be included. In this
volume no evidence that intervention causes a fall in mortality or a fall in the incidence of thick melanomas is given: it is, rather, suggested that the benefit is self evident or that population based evidence is too difficult to collect. Hopefully in a later volume measures of outcome will be investigated.

RUTH ELLMAN
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Across the world the seventies was a decade of new medical schools and for all but the English pair their battle cry was “relevance”. Training was to be relevant to the needs of their populations and the new medicine was to bridge the gap between technology and the community and its medical care. Some of the new schools offered revolutionary changes and were very relevant indeed. Maastricht in Holland, for example, and some Latin American schools, and Beer Sheva in the Israeli Negev undoubtedly led the way. However the traditionalist counter revolution, when it came, was tough and the Director of the Maastricht school was sacked after only a year. He was said to be too innovative. The Newcastle (Australia) experiment and McMaster in Canada both weathered the storm and Beer Sheva, under its masterly Dean Moshe Prywes was, if not untouched, then relatively unchanged.

This report, after 13 years of the Beer Sheva Experiment, claims to be an evaluation rather than a celebration though, being written mainly by the able and multidisciplined team who planned and executed the experiment, it has a forgivable bias. What is less forgivable perhaps is that nowhere in these formidable educational and humanistic insights, this wealth and richness of ideas and altruism, is there mention of the Arabs in the Occupied Territories. Gaza is a stone’s throw away from the school but it is in another world.

There is a lot that is good about the Beer Sheva Experiment: the Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences is head of Health Services for the Region, the students have more time to study and learn by doing and by problem solving and less by lectures; there are schools for all manner of health professionals working together; there is early clinical contact; hospital clinicians have community responsibilities; the curriculum is informed by learning theory and is up to date; and so on. Above all is passion and commitment and a head on tackling of the universal problems of curative versus preventive, hospital versus community, university versus health services, and basic sciences versus the clinicians. A justifiable smugness results. They are sure that they are right—and they probably are.

Some 34 papers describe the school and its philosophies. They are divided into Educational Issues and Health Services Issues. The six completed intakes form a cohort already subjected to a host of evaluations. Some of these are well described, as are Student Selection Methods (“fine people are not any more frequent among brilliant candidates”), teacher training, student participation (always a sensitive area, for students are not expert teachers, as so many believe, but expert only at being students), and the teaching of the vital backgound subjects of Biochemistry, Epidemiology, and the Behavioural Sciences.

If the quality of health care means anything to educators we should all know about the Beer Sheva Experiment. One way of finding out is to read this somewhat idealised account. It is valuable, readable and interesting. It is also challenging.

MAURICE BACKETT
Emeritus Professor, University of Nottingham


This is a distillate of more than two decades of teaching by the team at Johns Hopkins. In 1972 they combined their notes for their postgraduate classes because they were reluctant to ask students to read the literature, vast even 20 years ago. They found that these course notes contained a digest of the principles of the methods adopted from the various disciplines. The students appreciated them and so they were edited and published in their own volume in 1972, which is now in the 7th printing. However, from their experience in the field in Turkey, Taiwan, Peru, Nigeria and elsewhere they felt that worldwide there are too many impressive planning documents but very few accounts of the difficulties in implementation, and even less on their evaluation. Thus the time is ripe for a new volume concerned with the effectiveness of the methods. Although my old friend Bill Reinke modestly calls himself editor, in fact he is the leader of the Johns Hopkins team of Tim Baker, Carl Taylor, Tom Hall, and others, and is involved in 15 of the 21 chapters. We have “played doubles together” in Rio and Buenos Aires.