

features of the previous volume which made it so successful. Among the others one must list the comprehensiveness of the material, the attention to detail and the way in which these highly regarded experts make complex material comprehensible to a wide non-statistical audience. This volume will be welcomed by all in the field who will be well rewarded for their patience in waiting for its publication.

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Community medicine study guide. Eds: Weir RD, Innes G, Russell EM. (Pp 162; £7.95) London: Heinemann, 1988.

There is great variation in the extent and content of the teaching of community medicine in medical schools around the country, and this book provides a useful insight into the comprehensive course taught in Aberdeen. Aimed at providing an "index and guide to items that should be studied by students during a community medicine course" it achieves this by setting out a list of learning objectives for each broad topic covered, followed by a concise text related to those objectives and supplemented by a list of pertinent references.

Inevitably in a text embracing the concerns of community medicine there is a need to be selective. The sections on "Methods of Investigation" and "Prevention" are well defined subject areas that lend themselves to the authors' format. Sections on "Medical and Social Care" and "Health and Behaviour" are less well defined and it is often in these fields that medical students find the greatest difficulty, used as they are to absorbing factual knowledge of other subjects. However, the authors have defined their objectives well and related the text to these objectives in a readable way.

Given the broad nature of the subject it is easy to quibble about content. On a general level the authors missed the opportunity in their introductory chapter to place this study guide within the context of community medicine as practised in the NHS today. It is only in the final chapter "Priorities for the Future" that we learn something about the scope of the work of a community physician. On a more specific level in the section on "Methods of Investigation", the great emphasis on the health economic methodology compared with standard analytical epidemiological investigation (case-control studies and cohort studies not warranting a mention by name) presumably reflects the interests of the Aberdeen group.

This book is to be recommended to medical students exasperated by the seemingly hazy nature of their

community medicine studies and will also provide a useful resource for teachers keen to develop their community medicine courses.

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European community atlas of avoidable death: CEC Health Services Research Series No. 3. Ed: Holland WW. (Pp 356; £40.00). Oxford: Oxford Medical Publications, 1988.

This book presents selected mortality data and minimal data on health service resources and indicators of social conditions for all the EC countries as a series of maps and tables. There is little text, all of which is written in English, French and German. Twenty individuals are listed as having participated in assembling the data, in addition to the 11 contributors who were part of the London based coordinating team at some time between 1983 and 1986.

Although Paolo Fasella, European Community Director-General for Science, Research and Development, claims in the preface that "no attempt has been made in the atlas to interpret the patterns observed or draw conclusions", the title itself implies a judgement—European Atlas of *Avoidable Death*. The criteria for the selection of diseases are set out in a table form in one of the many appendices. Unfortunately the logic governing the selection of diseases is not universally transparent and many would argue with the inclusion of some of them and the exclusion of others. Some of the data are presented on a pan European basis and others are presented for divisions of each country. The way in which the spread of mortality is demonstrated is ingenious but not immediately obvious.

It is difficult to imagine the target audience for this book. It is too formal for the interested generalist to grasp the implications of variations in mortality, yet too sketchy and limited in time to be of value to a student of a particular disease or the effect of health care and social circumstance on the incidence of disease. One thing is clear. Within the European Community there are real difficulties in obtaining comparable mortality data from all member states.

The volume is beautifully presented, for which the publisher deserves congratulations. Its contents, although interesting in part, do not really justify the work that has gone into its production.

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