

Association, the Royal College of Nursing, the Royal College of General Practitioners, the British Paediatric Association, and the GMSC, the report laid out a model programme of preschool surveillance that could, so the Working Party believed, be justified by the scientific evidence that was available. The second document was the new contract for general practitioners, which introduced a new paediatric capitation allowance for general practitioners who provide an approved surveillance programme in their practices, and who are suitably trained to carry out the tests.

This book (one of whose authors was a member of the Joint Working Party) is the first postcontract guide for general practitioners about the screening of preschool children. Like the others in the series, it is intended to provide a concise, readable and practical guide that is likely to be consulted as much by health visitors as by the general practitioners at whom it is aimed. The screening programme described in the book is virtually identical to that proposed by the Joint Working Party, covering neonatal examinations, congenital dislocation of the hip, vision and hearing problems, heart disease, head circumference, weight and height problems, and cryptorchidism. Each topic has a brief epidemiological introduction, followed by detailed descriptions of the procedures involved in carrying out the tests, the criteria for passing or failing (a curiously anachronistic turn of phrase), and the circumstances in which the child ought to be referred. Brief suggestions for further reading are given.

This is unquestionably a most timely book, not least in offering general practitioners a quick check on whether it will be worth their while to undertake the necessary training to qualify for the new allowance. Its cook book format is plainly one that will appeal to most general practitioners, and if it is at all widely read it should substantially enhance the quality of surveillance in general practice. Whether it will be instrumental in bringing a measure of unity into a damagingly divided service is not a fair criterion against which to judge this particular book, but its success probably depends at least in part upon the responsiveness of general practitioners to the incentives introduced in their new contract.

J R BUTLER

**Living Standards during Unemployment Vol 1. The Results.** P Heady, M Smyth. (Pp 68; £10.60.) HMSO, 1989. ISBN 0-11-691271-5.

Reports from the Social Survey Division of OPCS are to be welcomed and one on unemployment especially so.

It is extraordinary just how little work has been published on the effects of unemployment from the UK—a country which could have specialised in this field in view of the size of the problem throughout the eighties. Almost no research has been commissioned or sponsored by the Department of Health and Social Security.

This new survey involved two interviews with a sample of about 3000 families whose breadwinners started to sign on in 1983 aged between 20 and 60. The first interview took place in the autumn of 1983 after they had been signing on for three months and the second interview took place a year later. The

survey was designed to see how living standards changed over the first 15 months of unemployment and to compare the circumstances of families whose breadwinners continued to sign on with those whose breadwinners returned to work. Most families experienced a rapid and substantial reduction in their material living standards. The main areas affected were food, clothing, and leisure activities. The psychological impact was considerable and was almost as great in the case of the wives of the unemployed men as in the case of the unemployed men themselves. As expected, the psychological wellbeing improved amongst those returning to work. For those who continued to sign on, the psychological scores for both men and their wives remained the same. There appeared to be no further deterioration or improvement over time. This result confirms the findings of Warr<sup>1</sup> that after an initial deterioration on first becoming unemployed, people's sense of psychological welfare tends on average to stabilise and not worsen over subsequent months. I have a number of criticisms of the report concerning the delay in publication, the form of the publication and the scope of the research.

The five year delay between data collection and publication is particularly unfortunate in a situation where definitions of "unemployment", of "eligibility for signing on" and the "levels of benefit" have changed frequently and dramatically. The report gives repeated caveats against drawing any conclusions that might pertain to 1989 and reminds us that the findings are clearly relevant "only to 1983/84".

The report is published in two volumes and separates the Results (Volume 1), with 1500 copies being printed, from the Technical issues and Methods. I have not yet seen the size of Volume 2 (with 2000 copies being printed) but the Results volume is only 68 pages long. The separation certainly makes the report less valuable for research purposes, as does the very limited reference section. The size of the print run suggests a limited readership.

The scope of the research itself was limited. It emphasised the loss of income and its effects but failed to address the impact of the loss of what Jahoda<sup>2</sup> called the secondary benefits of work. If going to work is not just about earning a living but also about activity, engaging in something productive, meeting people outside the family, enforcing a timetable on the day, about self esteem and status, then what is the effect of such a loss?

The authors simply asked informants what they had found the worst aspect of being unemployed. They then used a series of twelve questions used by the MRC/ESRC Social and Applied Psychology Unit to investigate the impact of unemployment by computing a "psychological wellbeing score". The method was not designed to detect the loss of Johoda's secondary benefits, nor was it likely to pick up characteristics that worsen over time with persistent unemployment.

Nevertheless, I found the report particularly easy to read. It is coauthored by Patrick Heady and Malcolm Smyth. Although an attempt has been made at marketing, with a new design for the front cover including the introduction of colour (somewhere between pale purple and off grey), it still looks anonymous. Why not a biographical note? Why not a brief history of the OPCS Social Survey Division and a list of

their recent publications? Dust covers and back covers have important uses beyond informing readers that HMSO accredited agents can be found in the Yellow Pages.

S C FARROW

- 1 Warr P. *Work, unemployment and mental health*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987.
- 2 Jahoda M. *Employment and unemployment: a socio-psychological analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982.

**Statistics with Confidence**, Ed MJ Gardner, DG Altman. (Pp 140; £7.95.) Medical Association, 1989. ISBN 0-7279-0222-9.

Contributors to medical publications have become increasingly aware of the need to apply statistical tests of significance to their data. Although this has represented an improvement on previous practice, statisticians have been aware that an overdependence on significance tests has developed. In most instances, the use of confidence intervals to complement significance tests will be vastly more informative.

In Britain, the British Medical Journal has been foremost in recognising the need to improve the standard of statistical presentation of data and has published several series of articles with a statistical theme. Even more importantly they have published statistical guidelines to which papers submitted to the BMJ are required to conform. These guidelines emphasise the importance of using confidence intervals.

This book arises directly from these origins, and indeed Part II consists of one chapter presenting the statistical guidelines and a second chapter giving check lists for assessing the statistical content of medical studies. The previous eight chapters cover the rationale for the use of confidence intervals and then detail methods for their construction. The great value of this book is that it presents, in an easily understood form, the methods which will be needed in most situations. These include those for use with survival data, relative risks, odds ratios, standardised ratios and rates, and basic non-parametric methods. Most introductory texts cover only a selection of these methods. To have them all included in a single slim and well written text, together with worked examples, should ensure the popularity of this book with medical researchers. The availability of a computer program to carry out the calculations will further enhance its appeal to this audience.

Does the book also serve a role as a medical undergraduate text book? The intentionally narrow field of coverage limits its value here. The curriculum at many medical schools allows so little time for medical statistics that time could not be found to use this book effectively. Where time in the curriculum is allocated more generously, this book could well be a valuable addition to the reading list. Students will appreciate the clearly worked examples, but they will, perhaps surprisingly, gain just as much from the chapter on statistical guidelines for authors. These eighteen pages are, of course, directed at aspiring authors of scientific papers. However, they contain, in concentrated form, much of the statistical wisdom which we would wish students to assimilate.

In summary, this is a book which fills a gap in the literature. The editors are to be

congratulated on integrating the contribution of seven authors into a book which is to some extent evangelical, but remains well written, clear and concise.

R PRESCOTT

**Trends in Coronary Heart Disease Mortality: The Influence of Medical Care.** MW Higgins, RV Luepker. (Pp 302; £32.) Oxford University Press, 1988. ISBN 0-19-505297-8.

Anyone interested in the epidemiology and prevention of coronary heart disease cannot fail to be impressed by the 60% decline in mortality from this disease in the USA over the last 30 years. This book represents the proceedings of a conference convened in December, 1986, to review the trends in coronary heart disease in the USA and in particular to assess the extent to which medical care has influenced the decline. The chapters are written by a series of American experts who examine the question from a number of different points of view, yet there is no sense of complacency about the current situation in the United States, perhaps because there is evidence that the rate of decline has slowed over the last decade. The sections of the book analyse the fall in coronary heart disease mortality, the trends in risk factors, and the impact of medical care on primary prevention, myocardial infarction and chronic manifestations of coronary heart disease. An attempt is made to relate the secular trends and regional variations in coronary heart disease to trends and variations in medical care. However one major deficiency in the enormous data sets on coronary heart disease in the USA is the inability to reliably separate incidence of disease from case fatality, although data are now being collected to address this deficiency. However the trend pattern of coronary heart disease in the USA seems to be of falling mortality, falling incidence, falling case fatality with rising disease prevalence and longer survival, trends which can be explained by either improved medical care, milder disease resulting from lifestyle changes, or a mixture of both. Rapid developments have taken place in the medical care of coronary heart disease and in new diagnostic techniques which have coincided with the decline in disease but it is difficult to prove a causal link. The relative impact of medical interventions versus lifestyle change is addressed more cautiously than before, as the complex interactions among risk factors and interventions is better understood. The role of medical care in changes in risk factors is concluded to be probably smaller than that of the lifestyle changes. Various aspects of the question are explored in detail using different approaches, and divergent views are expressed by the team of experts. The impact of cardiopulmonary resuscitation, management of myocardial infarction, drugs, coronary surgery, and angioplasty are all reviewed. No study has been mounted to address the question posed by this conference but many trials, studies and data sets on coronary heart disease are explored to shed light on the issues, and the need to develop better focused investigations is recognised. This book is important reading for those interested in the prevention of coronary heart disease, but don't expect all the answers!

W C S SMITH

## Short Reviews

**Effectiveness and Efficiency. Random reflections on health services.** AL Cochrane. (Pp 103; £9.95.) British Medical Association and the Nuffield Provincial Hospital's Trust, 1989. ISBN 0-7279-0282-2.

Originally published in 1977, Archie Cochrane's Rock Carling monograph "Effectiveness and Efficiency" was quickly recognised both nationally and internationally as a classic text and has had a great influence on attitudes towards the assessment of medical treatment and procedures. Apparently, demand for this book has remained constant and this new edition has additional interest; it includes a brief note by Archie Cochrane reflecting upon the monograph some two years after its publication and also his self written obituary.

**Brucellosis.** MM Madkour. (Pp 294; £65.) Guildford: Butterworth Scientific Ltd, 1989. ISBN 0723-60941-1.

Brucellosis is a common zoonotic disease of world wide distribution and in many countries the incidence of the disease continues to increase. This book provides a comprehensive review of the subject and includes chapters on epidemiology, microbiology, clinical features and programmes for control and prevention of the disease. The text is extremely well referenced and it should be a useful book for public health epidemiologists who have to deal with this condition.

**Cancer of the stomach.** JWL Fielding, J Powell, WH Allum, JAH Waterhouse, CC McConkey. (Pp 246; £40.) McMillan Press, 1989. ISBN 0-935859-80-2.

The West Midland Regions' Cancer Registry has been providing high quality data on a relatively stable population since 1957. This book provides a comprehensive analysis of this data in relation to gastric cancer. Much of the book comprises figures and tables describing many features of this disease, including histology, symptomatic presentation, treatment and survival, staging and prognosis. It should be of interest to epidemiologists concerned with gastric cancer.

**Hospital Closure; a Political and Economic Study.** Nancy Korman, Howard Glennerster. (Pp 173; £9.95.) Oxford University Press, 1990. ISBN 0-335-15429-8.

This book is about the administrative, financial and political issues involved in the closure of Darent Park Hospital—a large mental handicap hospital which served almost half of one Thames region. This hospital was the first large long stay institution closure in Britain, and the book is

based on a unique research project which monitored the political and professional debates, the planning process and the final implementation of the closure in detail over a seven year period. Beyond the closure, the authors' research went on to examine the fate of 800 former residents, where they went in the community, and the cost of re-provision of services for them.

**The Biological Basis of Disease. Selected papers by PRJ Burch.** Eds MS Chesters, JE Burch. (Pp 280; £14.95.) Leeds University Press, 1989. ISBN 0-85316-147-X.

The late Professor Philip Burch was primarily a physicist, but his work on radiation dosimetry led naturally to an interest in the biological, and particularly the carcinogenic, effects of radiation. His interest widened to cover the genetics, immunology and epidemiology of cancer and to causal mechanisms of disease. This book begins with three introductory essays by Burch's associates; F W Speirs, R G Burwell and A R Feinstein. Then follows a selection of 21 papers on a great variety of topics, for example, the aetiology of ulcerative colitis, health risks of passive smoking, and "Can epidemiology become a rigorous science?"

**Bibliography. Patient Compliance. A survey of Reviews (1979-1989).** C van Campen, EM Sluijs. (Pp 123; Dfl.10.) CIIP—Gegevens Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 1989. ISBN 90-6905-104-4.

Patient compliance with medical treatment has drawn much attention from physicians and social scientists. More than 4000 articles and books have appeared on the subject. This bibliography does not attempt to review these articles but rather surveys review articles that have appeared on the subject. Fifty six reviews are surveyed and include those focusing on compliance in the elderly, children and the chronically ill. Each title is accompanied by an abstract of approximately two pages. This short book should prove useful for those wishing to begin a literature review in this field.

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## NOTICE

**The 9th International Symposium on Atherosclerosis** will be held in Jerusalem on October 6-11, 1991. For further information please contact Professor Y Stein, PO Box 50006, Tel Aviv 61500, Israel.