Textbook of International Health. Paul F Basch. (Pp 423; £28.) Oxford University Press. ISBN 0-19-504897-0.

This is a text for the undergraduate planning an elective and trying to decide whether time would be better spent at home or abroad. Indeed it ends with the rather plaintive question "Why should we worry about other people's problems when there are plenty of problems here at home".

As a text book it has limitations. It would be unreasonable to expect any work to cover the breadth of topics reviewed in any depth in little more than 400 pages. However, the references (given at the end of chapters) are far from complete, are limited mostly to articles from a few journals, and are missing for some of the more contentious statements. There are many typographical errors, some more irritating than others (for instance "animalistic", p.78). As a social anthropologist interested in health planning I found the chapters on the context of illness, health and development, and policy and planning rather thin. It was surprising to me to read of sickle cell trait being referred to as a "lesser form of disease" with no elaboration of the effects of the stigmatisation associated with this description for community screening programmes.

The book is ambitious in coverage: a rapid review of the history of medicine is followed by a clearly written statement of the problems of measuring disease. The chapters on the context of illness and the environmental and biological setting of disease could have been (but were not) more integrated with those on infant and maternal mortality, and the three diseases smallpox, malaria, and AIDS. I liked the inclusion of the text of the declaration of Alma-Ata in the chapter on primary health care. The comparison of national health care systems, and the discussion of economic

aspects of health and international organisations should be a satisfactory introduction for the undergraduate. Indeed one imagines this is his intended reader as he admonishes that WHO is never said as "who"! The role of science and technology is described but leaves one with the unfortunate aftertaste that no worthwhile science is being done by anyone other than people from developed countries (in spite of his condemnation of scientific safaris).

The conversational style makes the book easy to read. It is a useful introduction for the interested reader.

A K ALLEN

Short Reviews

Epidemiology in Medical Practice, 4th edition. D J P Barker, G Rose. (Pp 176; £7.95.). Churchill Livingstone, 1990. ISBN 0-443-03783-3.

Now in its 4th edition, Barker and Rose's introductory text on epidemiology is standing the test of time. Aimed primarily at clinicians and medical undergraduates, it provides a comprehensive review of basic epidemiology and its applications. The text is essentially the same as in the third edition but some of the illustrative material has been updated. One of the attractive features of this book is that it is very readable and unlikely to bore the wary clinician with methodological detail.

World Health Organization. Directory of On-going Research in Cancer Epidemiology 1989/90 (IARC Scientific Publication No 101) Eds M Coleman, J Wahrendorf. (Pp 828; Cost not stated.) International Agency for Research on Cancer, 1989. ISBN 92-832-2101-X.

This large tome is a useful index for those working in the field of cancer epidemiology. Abstracts are provided for projects conducted in most countries throughout the world. In addition to identifying the location of the project, it is possible to cross reference according to study design, subject matter, cancer site, investigators, and chemical and occupational hazards. Searching the Directory is made easier by means of a 5" diskette provided with the publication.

F G R FOWKES

NOTICE

An International conference on Primary Care Obstetrics and Perinatal Health will take place at 's-Hertogenbosch, The Netherlands, on 21-22 March 1991. Organisers are the Netherlands Institute for Primary Health Care and the WHO Collaborating Centre for Primary Health Care. Closing date for abstracts 30 September. Further information from: NIVEL, L. Hingstman PhD, PO Box 1568, 3500 BN Utrecht, The Netherlands; tel 31-30-319946, fax 31-30-319290.