
Although there seems to be an increasing number of conditions reported to be caused by cigarette smoking, the title of this book at first surprised me. If does however cover a number of important conditions the prevalence of which is either increased or decreased by tobacco use. It reports the proceedings of a symposium organised by the Independent Scientific Committee on Smoking and Health in October 1988, with speakers which include a number of authorities from the USA and the UK. Parkinson's disease, endometrial cancer, ulcerative colitis, uterine fibroids and hyperemesis gravidarum are all less common in smokers; while osteoporotic fractures (mainly of the hip and vertebrae), Crohn's disease, age at menopause, and possibly gallstones and cancer of the rectum are considered to be smoking and hormone related conditions. Although the relative risks of these conditions are far lower than for the respiratory and cardiovascular conditions risks (lying between 0.5 and 2.0), study of them may be valuable in providing leads for the aetiology, prevention, and treatment of conditions such as Pudendal nerve entrapment and ulcerative colitis.

The book is well produced and gives an excellent summary of the effect of smoking on hormone related disorders.

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There is a wide interest in social differences in the human condition and a book comprising four papers on social class, from a sociologist, a statistician, a demographer, and a human biologist, is to be welcomed. These papers, prepared for the Biosocial Society in England and in May 1987, describe what was then current work and readers will expect new ideas for improving social class analyses.

This review of the historical and conceptual background to social class and reports associations between social class and self reported social class, educational attainment, and voting behaviour, leaving it to the reader to supply causal interpretations'. Peter Goldblatt succinctly reviews studies of time trends in social class differences in mortality. He uses data from the OPCS Longitudinal Study to test competing hypotheses and proposes interesting new measures not based on occupation. David Coleman charts the history of class differences in fertility and marriage, providing a useful review of the literature, but begs the interesting question of which factors fuel changes in demographic trends and how these explain the social class differences. He only hints at reasons for class differences in fertility and women's work, education, tenure, and attitudes. Less description and more examples of good analysis and interpretation would have been preferable. Nicholas Mascie-Taylor's whirlwind tour of the "biology of social class" documents class differences in morbidity, mortality, and social mobility, and in a section called "Genetic differences between social classes" refers to blood groups, schizophrenia, alcoholism, depression, IQ, and indicators of growth. This section is poorly referenced, despite the "enormous discussion" generated, and he does not distinguish between social class of origin and achieved social class in the studies he refers to. There is no mention of the human genome project, which will be of particular importance in assessing the relative contribution of genetic factors and the environment.

This ultimately disappointing book crucially lacks an introduction to the common themes and problems in the analysis and interpretation of social class differences. A precis of what the preface describes as a "lively debate" which followed each talk, could have provided suggestions for future research.

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This volume consists of seven very disparate but well referenced reviews dealing with different specialised issues in the hazard and risk assessment of chemicals. However the volume does not form a book as a whole the range of subject matter implied by the title, nor any specific single theme; thus any reader looking for such comprehensive cover in this volume would be disappointed.

The first review by Patierno deals with targeted chemical delivery and is mainly devoted to the potential therapeutic applications rather than the hazard assessment of such techniques as antibody-chemical sampling and the use of microspheres. However a few pages discuss the role of metal delivery from an environmental point of view explaining the toxicity of chromium and nickel. The second and fourth reviews deal essentially with pharmacological (toxic) kinetics. Thus Curtis and Hartmeyer-Caldwell's critical amends to the comparative account of the development and application of physiologically based pharmacokinetic models with special reference to cancer risk assessment. Relying mainly on chlorinated hydrocarbons as examples, it compares their kinetics between species and at various doses within the same species. Shah et al present a very useful account of factors affecting the penetration of chemicals. It covers mainly therapeutic agents, but this is probably determined by the published work available, although pesticides in particular are also dealt with. It relies heavily on a monotonic tabular rather than diagrammatic presentation of data. Moskowitz and Pithanisk in the third chapter present approaches to identify, characterize, and manage the risks of toxic gas release. It is, understandably, biased towards US legislation and standards and it appears to draw on the semiconductor industry for its examples. The fifth chapter (Frederickson et al) critically reviews the application of terrestrial microcosms in studying the fate of chemicals released in the environment, but includes a fairly specialised account of gene transfer. The longest chapter (80 pages, 264 references) by Givens et al deals very comprehensively with models of migration of contaminants in the subsurface environment. It details mathematical techniques applicable to such processes as the dispersion, retardation, and degradation of chemical contaminants under various conditions. Borehole and other techniques for testing and validating the hypothetical mathematical models by simulation are also described. The final chapter (Frederickson et al) is a systematic account of the sources, environmental impact, toxicokinetics, and toxicodynamics of polychlorinated dibenzo-p-dioxins and dibenzofurans and their various toxicity tests applied to these compounds and is a model of a typical chapter that a reader might expect in a book of its title.

The researchers from Brunel University have been limited to specialised libraries of research establishments and agencies responsible for environmental health.

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The Health Advisory Service (HAS) was set up 20 years ago in response to an outcry about the mentally ill and handicapped people. It has evolved and survived. The King's Fund has promoted an evaluation, and the book was written by the HAS's executive, asks if the HAS has fulfilled its role, is it good value for money and a model for future activities, possibly accreditation? The chosen evaluation method of case studies is justified and reports as agents of change assessed. HAS visits are shown to have an initial impact, reinforced when reports are received and follow up visits made. The book has enabled wider influence. Descriptions of the interaction of the researchers with different HAS visiting teams show how much depends on interpersonal skills and varying perceptions about success.

As an evaluation, this book illuminates the workings of the HAS, looks for objectives, and attempts to assess an anonymous and attendant difficulties. It succeeds in reaching reasoned conclusions that the HAS has reduced "disasters" (but does not provide a model for standard setting), and comments on costs. The HAS has gained attention for priority groups. This aspect of its functioning is subjective, but nonetheless valuable. A wide variety of people and institutions are involved in the care of the elderly, handicapped, and mentally handicapped. This book will be of interest to them and to those looking for guidance in carrying out evaluations.

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