

Smoking and Hormone Related Disorders. Ed Nicholas Ward, John Baron. (Pp 273; £40.00.) Oxford University Press, 1990. ISBN 019-261935-7.

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. It 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 related to smoking (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 Parkinson's disease and ulcerative colitis. The book is well produced and gives an excellent summary of the effect of smoking on hormone related disorders.

KEITH BALL
Department of Community Medicine
The Middlesex Hospital Medical School
London

Biosocial Aspects of Social Class. Ed CG Nicholas Mascie-Taylor. (Pp 144; £22.50.) Oxford University Press, 1990. ISBN 0-19-857724-9.

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, presented to the Biosocial Society in Oxford in May 1987, describe what was then current work and readers will expect new ideas for improving social class analyses.

Anthony Heath gives 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,

mating patterns, 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 studies of schizophrenia and alcoholism. 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.

DIANA KUH
MRC National Survey of Health
and Development
University College London
The Middlesex Hospital Medical School
Department of Community Medicine
London WC1

Hazard Assessment of Chemicals, Vol 7. Ed J Saxena. (Pp 352; £60.00.) Hemisphere Publishing Corporation, Basingstoke, 1990. ISBN 1-56032-024-9.

This volume consists of seven very disparate well referenced reviews dealing with different specialised issues in the hazard and risk assessment of chemicals. However the volume does not set out to cover 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 one volume would be disappointed.

The first review by Patierno deals with targeted chemical delivery and is mainly devoted to the potential therapeutic application 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 form and valency in explaining the toxicity of chromium and nickel. The second and fourth reviews deal essentially with pharmacokinetic (toxicokinetics). Thus Curtis and Hattemeyer-Fry give a critical and 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 skin penetration by 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 monotonous tabular rather than diagrammatic presentation of data. Moskowitz and Fthenakis in the third chapter present approaches to identify, characterise, 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 Güven *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. Bore hole and other techniques for testing and validating the hypothetical mathematical models by simulation are also described. The concluding review by Safe is a systematic account of the sources, environmental impact, toxicokinetics, and toxicodynamics of polychlorinated dibenzofurans and allied substances. It includes a summary of the 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 readership of this volume is likely to be limited to specialised libraries of research establishments and agencies responsible for environmental health.

RAYMOND AGIUS
Department of Community Medicine
Medical School
Teviot Place, Edinburgh

The Health Advisory Service—an Evaluation. Mary Henkel, Maurice Kogan, Tim Packwood, Tim Whitaker, Penny Youll. (Pp 104; £9.95.) Kings Fund Publishing, London. ISBN 1-870511-97-4.

The Health Advisory Service (HAS) was set up 20 years ago in response to an outcry about the care of mentally ill and handicapped people. It has evolved and survived. The King's Fund has prompted an evaluation, hence the book. Robert Maxwell, its chief executive, asks if the HAS has fulfilled its role, is it good value for money and a model for future activities, possibly accreditation?

The researchers from Brunel University have analysed the origins and philosophies of the service, from inspectorial to persuasive mode. The lack of static objectives makes evaluation difficult and this is acknowledged. This book provides a clear description of the functioning of the HAS alongside other service appraisals.

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. Publication of HAS reports 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 an assessment of worth, despite 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, mentally ill and mentally handicapped. This book will be of interest to them and to those looking for guidance in carrying out evaluations.

SYLVIA McLAUHLAN
South West Thames Regional
Health Authority, London W2