

helpful to many. It is sad to note that because of its long gestation, some chapters are already out of date. Of particular regret is that the 1989 white paper and NHS Act merit only a few brief anticipatory paragraphs. I am sure that many would have looked to a book such as this to give them as clear an explanation of current arrangements as it does of the previous ones. Nonetheless, I think that the *Oxford textbook* should find a place on the "to hand" reference shelves of public health physicians and be in regular use.

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This substantial publication remains an excellent reference textbook, with its concise and mainly well written chapters. Each chapter is self contained and usually encapsulates its topic in a readable style and, where detail is limited, good references are provided. The inclusion of many overseas authors undoubtedly improves this edition.

Many authors have contributed and one result of this is a certain amount of repetition. While usually acceptable, this is particularly evident in volume 1, sections C to F, where sequential reading of the sections becomes more than a little trying.

One particular feature of annoyance is the way of dealing with differences within the United Kingdom. Here the phrase "broadly similar" is used too often and, on at least one occasion, is followed by inaccuracies. One solution might be to give one chapter solely to highlighting intranational differences.

Overall, this remains a good standard textbook for public health.

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The advantages and shortcomings of a multi-author work are clearly exemplified in the *Oxford textbook* in its content relating to environmental and occupational health. Thus the chapters on ionising radiation (vol 2, chapter 27) and on workers (vol 3, chapter 27) are generally excellent, concise, and commendable accounts of the basic science as well as the public health and epidemiology. However, elsewhere in the work the health effects and epidemiology of chemical exposures, such as environmental "passive" tobacco smoke and pesticides, tend to be inadequately covered. The classification of exposure (volume 2, page 169) is unhelpful and the discerning reader would have been better served with a discussion of average, peak, and cumulative exposures and an evaluation of exposure limits. Specific guidance on appropriate sampling methods for airborne and waterborne hazards would have been much more germane than overemphasis on laboratory accreditation (vol 2, chapter 30). The chapter on field investigations of air (vol 2, chapter 25) is an excellent rendition of the epidemiological aspects of airborne pollution in an industrial society although it says very little about the conduct of a field investigation for a reader

who might wish to embark on this. The important contribution of musculoskeletal injuries to morbidity, quality of life, and the economy is very clearly highlighted (vol 3, chapter 18) with a wealth of relevant data, but "prevention and control" should correspondingly have merited more detailed advice to the reader with some mention of the impact of ergonomics.

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**Improving the Health of Older People—A World View.** Eds Robert L. Kane, J Grimley Evans, David Macfadyen. (Pp 693; £50.00) Oxford University Press on behalf of the WHO, 1990. ISBN 019 2617923.

This is a book on the health of older people edited and in large part written by three of the heavyweights in social and clinical gerontology. The book is described as "a product of the programme for older persons" which the WHO established in 1982, but does not make completely clear how the contributors were chosen. Each section is introduced by one of the three editors.

The first chapter consists of the results of a Dephi survey of international experts on progress within geriatric care. One's view of this sort of survey is always highly coloured by one's presence or absence on the list of "experts".

The section on health and function looks at demographic trends and other general social gerontology issues. This includes the assessment of health and functional status and social factors affecting the health of the elderly. There is a section on areas which have made specific progress in recent years, particularly in the biology of aging, osteoporosis, and intervention for the mental health of the elderly. Disease prevention during aging is included though little progress is reported.

The section on health care gives due to emphasis to primary care, and to the role of the family in care of the elderly in developing and developed countries. Assessment and case management, the place of different forms of care for elderly people, including geriatrics, and the impact of new technologies are also tackled.

An important section includes information on education and training needs for new groups of people who will be called upon to serve elderly people. The last section is on health and social policy issues including economic and social security factors and ethical issue in relation to care for the elderly.

The book is a useful compilation of information, most of it previously published, on the important issues in relation to the aging population and the care of elderly people. The introductory chapters to each section are most useful. Some controversial areas, such as a longer lifespan leading to an increase in the morbidity pattern, accurately reflect some of the confusion usually engendered by strongly held views. Professor

Fillenbaum's description of the assessment of health and functional status should silence complaints that there is no good way to assess health. Of particular interest to me was the contrast between the research showing that a great number of "high tech" interventions are equally if not more effective in older than in younger people, but when those services aimed specifically at elderly people are examined, they appear to be of relatively little proven benefit. The latter includes that central link of the Community Care Act, case assessment and management.

Overall this is an interesting and learned work, drawing together many of the issues which are central to improving the health of older people. The size and nature of the book make it primarily a reference source rather than a quick read, but it would be a useful means of bringing up to date anyone interested in the field.

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**Other People's Tobacco Smoke.** Ed A K Armitage. (Pp 183; £12.95.) Galen Press, Beverley, Yorkshire, 1991. ISBN 0-95087261 X

This book examines the effects of environmental tobacco smoke (ETS) on non-smokers' health and is intended for the general public and those concerned with the health and safety in the workplace. Any hope that this might be a balanced perspective is dashed in the first paragraph of the introduction: "Some people have been conditioned to believe that their health is actually put at risk by exposure to ETS". This tone pervades much of the book. There are some useful chapters describing tobacco smoke in the context of other sources of everyday environmental pollution, problems in measurement of its physical and chemical constituents, perception of irritant and odour effects, and social attitudes. The chapter on respiratory effects of environmental tobacco smoke (excluding lung cancer) in children and adults is a well referenced and detailed summary of the studies with thoughtful comments on interpretation. In contrast the chapter on environmental tobacco smoke and lung cancer, probably of most concern to the reader, is insubstantial. Epidemiological methods (and epidemiologists!) are heavily criticised but there is inadequate discussion applied to individual studies. For example, the reader is told the sample sizes were too small but is not given the odds ratios and confidence intervals to judge. Meta-analysis is dismissed in a single line "Many scientists dispute the validity of pooling data from different types of studies of varying size, design and quality". The chapter on other cancers is more informative and less opinionated. It is noticeable that in other chapters, for example those on the relationship of environmental tobacco smoke to heart disease or to pregnancy outcome, any study with a positive association is deemed