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 It is sad to note that because of its long gestation, some chapters are already out of date.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.

MARIA DLUGOLECKA
Consultant in Public Health Medicine

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.

BRUCE DUNCAN
Public Health Medicine Trainee

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.

RAYMOND AGIUS
Senior Lecturer in Environmental/
Occupational Health

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.

NORMAN J VETTER
South Glamorgan Health Authority
Cathays Park, Cardiff

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

methodologically suspect, while the negative studies are accepted uncritically! The book ends with a chapter by Peter Skrabanek which is, as expected, witty and provocative, but makes no contribution to the scientific arguments.

At the beginning the reader is exhorted to "read on and make up your own mind about environmental tobacco smoke". I still have not made up my mind about it. That would be impossible from such a partial book.

ASTRID FLETCHER

Department of Medicine
Royal Postgraduate Medical School
Hammersmith Hospital, London

Life after Ninety. Mike Bury, Anthea Holme. (Pp 198; £35.) Routledge, London, 1991. ISBN 0415 04165 1

One of the most profound achievements of the twentieth century in Britain, and indeed in other parts of the western industrial world, has been the reduction in premature mortality. Instead of being welcomed as a triumph of public health, the resultant "greying" of the population is presented as a social disaster which threatens the social and economic wellbeing of both older people and the young who it is supposed will have to make "sacrifices" to care for their elders.

In such simplistic arguments and debates the use of stereotypes abounds. Typically people aged above pensionable age are presented as a homogeneous social group; preretirement differences, such as class, gender, or ethnicity, are assumed to be of little importance. Furthermore this postretirement age group is presented as being dependent, socially isolated, and ridden with ill health.

Gerontologists and other researchers have been actively engaged in refuting these simplistic stereotypes and in deconstructing the pensionable population into its constituent elements. A key distinction is often made between those aged under and over 75 years. However, to date there have been fewer studies of the "oldest" old, ie, those who survive into their ninth and tenth decades. This book is an important new contribution to our understanding of the experience of very old age. Bury and Holme present the results of a survey of a representative sample of people aged 90 years and over. Although the population studied was heavily dependent and a little over one half lived in institutions the authors show that life after 90 can be of high quality. One important aspect of the study is the demonstration of the importance of social inequalities in influencing who will reach very old age—the poor having much less chance of survival than their more affluent contemporaries.

This is an excellent book which is highly readable and deserves the widest possible readership.

CHRISTINA VICTOR

Public Health Research Unit
Department of Public Health Medicine
Parkside Health Authority
London

The Initiation of National Nutrition Policies: A Comparative Study of Norway and Greece. Elizabet Helsing (Pp 300.) Styx Publications, Groningen, 1990. ISBN 90 72371 18 6.

Most countries have long had food policies based on economic issues but nutrition policies relating to health are rare. This book examines several aspects of the setting up of nutrition policies in Norway and Greece. The two countries make an interesting comparison for they have much in common—small, mountainous countries, small populations, limited agricultural land, extensive coastline, and a history of food shortages, but obvious differences such as climate, traditional diet, political situation, and patterns of diet related disease.

This book is written by Elizabet Helsing who is the Nutrition Officer in the European Office of WHO. She has made major contributions by putting nutrition into the forefront of any discussion of the chronic diseases in Europe. Her views are therefore of particular importance. However, the book does not make easy reading. It is based on Helsing's PhD thesis and does not seem to have been rewritten for publication and a broader readership. It is tedious, with numerous subheadings, wordy definitions and much repetition. And yet some of the analyses are superficial, with no consideration of the economics, and sadly, the actual nutrition policy of Norway, which was well ahead of its time, is not described in any detail. The section on Greece, with no nutrition policy, is almost twice as long. I missed any feeling for the author's perspective, which is surprising in view of her WHO role.

There are many unfortunate typographical errors and omissions, and it is sometimes hard to distinguish these from the unusual use of English and strange paragraphing. Nearly one third of the book is an abridged version in Greek. The references are extensive and the work does contain a wealth of interesting information, but on the whole I found this a frustrating and disappointing book.

ANN RALPH

The Rowett Research Institute
Aberdeen

Smoking Behaviour from Pre-Adolescence to Young Adulthood. Eds A V Swan, M Murray, L Jarrett. (Pp 231; £30.00.) Avebury, Aldershot, UK, 1991. ISBN 1 85628 033 0.

This book describes a classic and well known longitudinal study of young people's smoking. The research covered a period from 1974 to 1984, starting when the cohort of children was 11 or 12 years of age. Surveys were carried out at intervals until they were 21 or 22. Smoking prevalence and uptake were analysed in relation to a wide range of background factors.

Analyses included parental smoking and attitudes; hobbies, sports, and spare time interests; training; part time jobs; positive reasons for and against smoking; attitudes to

school; realisations of health hazards of smoking; peer pressure. At the young adult stage, facts relating to employment were added. The more subtle psychological beliefs held by children about smoking and effects of advertising were not included.

It must be borne in mind when reading this book that, although a classic, this study is now historical and may not reflect the current situation with regard to young people's smoking. This effect is also seen in some of the concepts expressed in the introduction when research into children's smoking was in its infancy.

Many of the study findings have already been published as papers, and two useful features of this book are that it lists the references to these 21 previous publications and that it presents the study as a whole.

The book is useful methodologically because it contains a considerable amount of information on the methods of analysis used. For example, 90 of the 231 pages are the questionnaires in full in their original layout. A breakdown of the variables used for analysis is also provided. With additions and updating in the light of the current knowledge and information needs, these questionnaires would provide a useful basis for the development of similar surveys. The descriptions of the complex analytical methods used, though possibly bewildering to non-statisticians, could also be very useful.

Overall, this book provides an invaluable overview of smoking among teenagers growing up in the 1970s and helps to provide a guide for constructing such studies in the future.

ANNE CHARLTON

CRC Education and Child Studies Research
Group
University of Manchester

ABC of AIDS, 2nd edition. Ed Michael W Adler. (Pp72; £10.95.) British Medical Journal, London. ISBN 0 7279 0267 9.

It is four years since this popular book, composed of articles first published in the *BMJ*, appeared. Much in the world of AIDS has changed in this time and the second edition reflects this. Earlier omissions are corrected with the inclusion of sections on the problems of drug abuse and on HIV infection in children, while original material has been rewritten and updated.

The book's total length is slightly increased to 72 pages within which an impressive range of subjects has been tackled. The basic sciences relating to the epidemic, epidemiology, virology, and immunology, are succinctly described, and HIV disease is reviewed by body system. The publication's practical emphasis (its primary audience is the health worker faced with HIV/AIDS for the first time), is underlined by several chapters which address management issues within specific patient groups and strategies for prevention, counselling, infection control, nursing care, and drug treatment of infection. This is achieved with a minimum of unnecessary duplication, and, in a subject where facts have a very limited shelf life, is, for the most part, up to date.