The problem with this format is the danger of repetition, particularly between the first two parts of each volume, although the authors have been selective in the reproduction of individual country material. The balance is best achieved in the volume on transplantation in which the discussion section brings in material from countries beyond the study area, and the individual country statements complement the review on specific issues.

The transplant volume also benefited from the availability of more comprehensive statistics. The diffuse nature of the four prenatal screening technologies posed problems for analysis, and the lack of a clearly defined hospital service responsible for their use made statistical information hard to obtain. Technologies which involve a greater element of medical skill and time input are also more difficult to cost. Technologies to treat renal stones, particularly lithotripsy, are more equipment orientated and thus easier to quantify.

It is disappointing to find that the poor quality of health service data is still preventing more rigorous analysis of the adoption and utilisation of medical technology. The overview section is based on the elaborate model of innovation developed in the medical context by the Office of Technology Assessment, but there is no attempt to analyse diffusion curves. Qualitative analysis is presented, based on the expert opinion of those taking part in the study. Many factors appear to have had an influence on particular technologies in individual countries but no consistent pattern emerges. The general conclusion is that the diffusion of medical technology is dominated by clinical decision making and governments will only be able to control the process when they demand evaluation of technologies. Thus readers may have their suspicions confirmed, and be provided with much interesting information about the use of medical technologies in Europe by these books. New thinking on modelling the diffusion process and the development of policy is harder to find.

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New Directions in Health Psychology Assessment. Ed Harold E Schroeder. (Pp 177; £28.00.) Hemisphere Publishing Corporation, Bristol, PA, USA, 1991. ISBN 0-8911-6925-3

This book is concerned with exploring fundamental questions of what constitutes a determinant of health in a world where improvements in a developed nation's health are increasingly less likely to be linked to medical interventions. The byproduct of a conference held at Kent State University in 1987, the contributors aim to point out the limitations of current methods of assessment and suggest new areas which might profitably be explored.

Three chapters are particularly concerned with the development and operationalisation of complex models. Kaplan renders the cost/utility basis underlying his General Health

Policy Model of quality of life assessment almost acceptable by sidestepping the morally difficult areas of treatment selection and comparing the relative merits of two health promotion techniques in preventing premature death and improving quality of life. Olson and Stewart construct a model which maps family systems theory onto the stress, coping, and adaptation literature. This model allows for the complex interactions between different systems, the family with those at work, at an individual or couple level, to be taken into account. This interaction between domains is also considered in Karoly's excellent contribution. He develops a new, process focused, approach to exploring inconsistencies in individuals' health related behaviours on the basis of the variety of goals they pursue.

The two chapters which look specifically at the relationship between properties of the physical environment and health disappointingly fail to address assessment issues in the same detail as the other contributors. While Evans and colleagues concentrate on describing the effects of the environment on the health and cognitive development of children, Kasl, in his chapter on work, chooses to focus on the problems of research design.

In the final chapter on community needs assessment Rhodes and Jason return to the issue of values where they highlight the importance of preserving a balance between the expertise of professionals and the community's perceptions of its own needs, however difficult these are to determine.

Given that the purpose of this book was to broaden the debate as to what constitutes a health related behaviour rather than comprehensively cover a specific field, it is, inevitably, patchy both in subject matter and in the approaches taken by the various contributors. As it stands it provides a vindication of the view that what we need is not necessarily the generation of endless amounts of new data but frameworks within which existing data can be interpreted and the systemic relationships between one domain and another elucidated.

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A Review of Biostatistics: A Program for Self-Instruction (4th ed). by Paul E Leaverton. (Pp 145; £12.50.) Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, 1991. ISBN 0-632-02911-0

This slim ring bound book seeks to introduce the reader to the fundamental concepts of biostatistics in approximately 100 pages. The book is written in the style of a Do It Yourself guide rather than a reference manual and is preceded by a short introduction laying out the educational objectives of each chapter.

Each page of the following eight chapters is divided; the main text is on the left, and consists of a series of short points which are frequently interspersed with simple questions. Answers to these questions are found on the right half of the page. This style does encourage the reader to think about

whether the material presented has been understood. Many of the questions are very basic, often involving selecting a single word or performing a simple calculation. However, a reader who does not get the correct answer is not always provided with an explanation.

The first three chapters of the book cover basic concepts including descriptive statistics, probability (with a brief mention of sensitivity and specificity), and a helpful section on populations, samples, and the Normal distribution. Statistical inference is then addressed with chapter four, introducing confidence intervals and their interpretation, and chapter five, having a definite emphasis on hypothesis testing and statistical significance. Chapter six reviews linear regression and correlation, and chapters seven and eight give a brief introduction to clinical trials and some epidemiological concepts. This is followed by a list of 15 selected references which enlarge on the material discussed. The book finishes with a comprehensive index. Details of method calculations are kept to a minimum or completely omitted, and examples from the medical literature are very limited and are not referenced. No mention is given to non-parametric tests.

In summary, this is a useful book for those in the medical and public health fields requiring a "crash course" in basic concepts and interpretation of medical statistics, but would not be sufficient for those wishing to apply the methods introduced. One of the nice features of the book is that it can easily be worked through in a day, but obviously this concise style places limitations on the depth of material covered.

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Distribution of Cataracts in the Population and Influencing Factors. (*Developments in Ophthalmology*, vol 21.) Eds K. Sasaki, O Hockwin. (Pp 182; price not stated.) Karger Publishers, Basle, 1991. ISBN 3-8055-5335-8

This book contains 27 selected papers presented at the Third International Symposium on Cataract Epidemiology in Singapore in March, 1990. The opening paper is a review of epidemiological methodology which highlights the difficulties of studying cataract. The uninitiated may be surprised to learn that cataract comprises a set of pathologies which differ in their site, morphology, and biochemical properties and may be related to different risk factors. Three papers specifically discuss cataract classification systems for epidemiological studies. Seven papers describe experimental cataract research using rats and a variety of agents which are thought to either promote or retard cataract formation. Cataract surgeons may be relieved to hear that no potent agent to prevent cataract formation is predicted but animal and human studies suggest that the consumption of antioxidants such as vitamins C and E, and pyruvate, may inhibit cataract formation.

The 10 papers which report epidemiological studies are, with the exception of two from Bulgaria, based on non-European