nearly unreported associations, even though some of these associations appeared to be highly significant.

Some of the limitations of the study, including insufficient sample sizes for some cancers, are adequately discussed. Others would seem to merit further thought. According to Doll and Peto, diet, alcohol, and smoking, between them, contribute nearly 20 times more to overall cancer risk than known occupational factors. The value of the present study is arguably limited by failure to take potential confounding variables sufficiently into account. Thus the categories used for smoking adjustment seemed crude, while the only types of food (carotene containing) for which data were collected were not even considered in the analysis.

In his introduction to the book the author comments on "the imbalance between rhetoric and knowledge concerning environmental carcinogens". Despite the widely perceived importance of environmental carcinogens, only a small number of the many thousands of chemicals with which man comes into contact have been evaluated epidemiologically, and the study is a brave attempt to correct this perceived imbalance. The results are clearly presented and the book is well written. The question is, do the contents of the book justify undertaking larger studies of similar design?


The persistence of class differences, despite nearly half a century's use of an almost free health service, is one of the less attractive aspects of British society. The National Child Development Study has been following the fortunes of 17,000 Kingdom to know how week of 1958, 10 years after the creation of the NHS. In this book, researchers from the Social Statistics Research Unit at London's City University examine findings from its 1981 survey (based on interviews with three quarters of its original sample plus material from earlier interviews, to explore class differences in the health of these young adults.

Health and class is well set out and produced. What does it tell us? Health differences between classes at age 23 years are established early in the book, and explanation sought under four headings: circumstances at birth, socioeconomic circumstances during childhood and adolescence, education, and personal habits. The wealth of available material has been trimmed: class differences at 23 are reduced to contrasting classes I and II subjects with those from classes IV and V. Class III is simply excluded. Outcome variables have been limited to self rated health, a neurotic symptom checklist, the reporting of psychological and emotional problems, and height.

The teasing out of significant intervening variables forms the core of the book, and yields both self evident and surprising results. Social mobility makes little impact. Getting a paper qualification at the end of schooldays is hardly a surprising candidate but scoring a deviant rating on the Rutter Scale at age 16 is less obvious. School teachers have an ability to spot losers. Or do they create self fulfilling prophecies? This is the kind of question this useful analysis raises for others to solve.