

Maternal Mortality: a Global Factbook. By C A Zahr and E Royston. (Pp 598; SFr 50.) Geneva: WHO, 1991. ISBN 92-4-159001-7.

Every year half a million women die as a result of pregnancy—99% of them in developing countries. Most of the deaths are preventable, but the enormity of the task generates the kind of compassion fatigue induced by Oxfam mailshots. We forget that only 60 years ago maternal mortality in Britain was as high as it is today in Central Africa, where one in every 200 pregnant women dies. Our rate was reduced to 1 in 10 000 not by a social revolution but by the efforts of health workers and politicians, after society decided that something must be done. An important factor was the Confidential Enquiry into Maternal Deaths, which gathered detailed information on each case. Only then could steps—ranging from providing more anaesthetists to legalising abortion—be taken to eradicate preventable causes.

Maternal mortality, a global factbook is part of WHO's "safe motherhood initiative" aimed at halving maternal mortality by the year 2000. The book—the size of a large telephone directory—is the companion to the 1989 WHO publication *Preventing maternal deaths*, which suggested ways of combating the problems. This new volume contains background information sometimes hard to find in developing countries—for example, on demography, health expenditure, fertility, and female age at marriage (16 years in Chad, 30 in Haiti). Everywhere literacy is lower among women than men: in Afghanistan the female literacy rate is 8%, the male rate 39%.

From many sources—government estimates, hospital studies, and doctoral theses—the book draws information on maternal deaths and avoidable causes. This is a far cry from Britain's committee of experts poring over the details of each death, but it is an essential starting point. A British obstetrician feels humbled to think of 150 000 women bleeding to death and 100 000 dying from illegal abortion. The effort involved in compiling this book must have been considerable, but it is hard to imagine a more worthwhile project.

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Short Reviews

Clearing the Air: a guide for Action on Tobacco. By M Raw, P White, A McNeill. (Pp 151.) London: BMA, on behalf of WHO, 1990. ISBN 0-7279-0287-3.

This book comprises an innovative approach to the analysis of tobacco control initiatives resulting from cooperation between the British Medical Association, World Health Organization, and Commission of the European Communities. It draws on the experience of tobacco control advocates round the world through a set of case studies,

each describing a particular action or programme, and highlights the reasons for success. Included are classic campaigns for legislation in Australia and Canada, different approaches to the control of tobacco advertising, and action at community level. The book includes a substantial resources section listing key organisations concerned with tobacco control.

Half a Century of Social Medicine: An Annotated Bibliography of the Work of Alice M Stewart. Ed C Renate Barber. (Pp 45; £7.50.) Banbury: The Piers Press, 1987. ISBN 0-9503558-2-8.

This book brings together the many strands of research in social medicine conducted by Dr Alice Stewart. Perhaps best known for her understanding of the childhood cancers and the subsequent realisation of the continuous dose-response relationship between cancer and radiation exposure, the series of papers reproduced in this book indicates the breadth and detail of the work conducted by Dr Stewart during her professional life.

The New Epidemiology Monitor (Monthly). Roger Bernier, 2560 Whisper Wind Court, Roswell, Georgia 30076. USA. 1991 annual rate \$30. ISSN 0744-0898.

Our readers in the United States will be familiar with the *Epidemiology Monitor* which is a monthly publication outlining new developments in epidemiology; symposia; research developments; book reviews; appointments and other issues of general interest to the epidemiologist. This publication has now been upgraded to *The New Epidemiology Monitor* with one aim of increasing world coverage of news and activities in epidemiology. The presentation is short and stylish and this publication should be useful to busy epidemiologists who want to keep abreast of developments in their speciality.

GERRY FOWKES

NOTICES

Second Summer Course in Biostatistics. An intensive three week application orientated biostatistics course will take place at the Christian Medical College, Vellore, India, from 15 June to 3 July 1992. Further details from Professor P S S Sundar Rao, Department of Biostatistics, Christian Medical College, Vellore 632002; tel 22603; fax 416 25035. Final date for registration 30 April.

The 1st Pan-European Conference on Medical Services will take place in Budapest, Hungary, from 30 August to 3 September, 1992. Further information from Conference Secretariat, Interconvention, Austria Centre Vienna, Am Hubertusdamm 6, A-1450 Vienna, Austria; tel 42-1-2369-2643; fax 43-1-2369-648.

Physical Medicine Research Foundation multidisciplinary meeting: Pain and disability—can we prevent them? Date 3-5 September 1992. Place: Oxford, UK. Further details from: The Secretary, Wessex

Rehabilitation Association, Odstock Hospital, Salisbury, Wiltshire, United Kingdom; tel 0722 336262, extension 4057.

Berzelius Symposium 1922: Water and Public Health (joint conference of the Swedish Society of Medicine and the Royal Society of Medicine). Date: 7-9 September 1992; place: Royal Society of Medicine, 1 Wimpole St, London W1M 8AE. Contact: Samantha Greshoff, at the RSM; tel 071-408 2119.

The First International Conference on Dietary Assessment Methods, "Assessing diets to improve world health", will take place in St Paul, Minnesota, USA, on September 20-23, 1992. Final date for receipt of abstracts January 15, 1992. For further information contact Department of Professional Development and Conference Services, 210 Nolte Center, 315 Pillsbury Drive SE, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN 55455-0139, USA; tel 612 625-3451; fax 612 626-1632.

Hazard control at the workplace: research and development of new risk prevention strategies. Fourth International Symposium of the ISSA Research Section, Strasbourg, 22-23 October 1992. Sections will cover risk analysis and appropriate prevention strategies, measurement of atmospheric pollution at the workplace, protective equipment, and changing technologies and their influence on human operators. Abstracts by 31 October 1991. Further details from INRS (attn C Skornik), 4 Colloque du Comité Recherche, 30 rue Oliver-Noyer, 75680 Paris Cedex 14, France.

6th Asian Congress of Agricultural Medicine and Rural Health. Date: January 22-24, 1993. Place: Loni, Maharashtra, India. Topics include maternal and child health, environmental hazards, primary health care, economics of health care. Deadline for submission of abstracts June 30, 1992. Further details from: Dr N S Mhaske (Organising Secretary), 6th Asian Congress, Pravara Medical Trust, Loni 413 736, Dist. Ahmednagar, Maharashtra, India; fax 91-24225-2413.

The 24th International Congress on Occupational Health will take place in Nice, France, on September 26-October 1 1993. The aims of the congress are to bring together professionals in occupational medicine from around the world and to promote the development of scientific knowledge in the field. For further information contact: CO 24 France, "Les Miroirs", Cedex 27, 92096 Paris La Defense, France. Tel 33-1 47 62 33 70; Fax 33-1 47 62 31 53.

13th Scientific Meeting of The International Epidemiological Association: "New Pathways in Epidemiology". Date: September 26-30, 1993; place: Sydney, Australia; contact address: Conference Secretariat, 13th Scientific Meeting of the IEA, PO Box 746, Turramurra 2074, NSW, Australia; tel 61 2 449 1525, fax 61 2 488 7496.