

n9 monounsaturates (-0.61), daily rice intake from dietary survey (-0.58), daily ration of rice in 1982 obtained from questionnaire (-0.53), daily wheat flour intake (0.67), and aridity of the county on a four point scale (-0.57). Non-significant low correlations included the percentage of people currently smoking (0.27), the average daily consumption of cigarettes (0.02), and total plasma cholesterol (0.04). It is tempting to say that it is anybody's guess what all this might mean, especially since unexpected findings sit alongside expected findings—questions about the meaning of the individual variables are clearly of major importance. Thus the book as a whole is a great challenge to the chronic disease and cancer epidemiologist as well as the nutritionist and health ecologist.

Peto's concluding remark, having acknowledged the many deficiencies of such a study, is that this should perhaps be seen as the first in a series of studies. Indeed in 1989 a large mortality survey has been repeated together with a supplementary survey of the characteristics such as the one reported in the present volume. The health workers of China clearly need to be congratulated for the massive effort involved in collecting, analysing and publishing this encyclopaedia of data, in cooperation with the United States and the United Kingdom. The international public health community must have a responsibility to assist the People's Republic in making use of this storehouse of information and in maximising the utility of follow up studies.

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Sickness and Health. By Colin Douglas. (Pp 523; £14.99.) William Heinemann, London, 1991. ISBN 0-434-20424-2

The author of this substantial novel writes, under a pseudonym, on a topic he knows intimately, the recent history of a great institution. One of Scotland's teaching hospitals is subjected to penetrating forensic examination and exposed for all to see. Two generations of medical men and women experience the NHS, from its joyous birth to its lingering demise, mirroring in their personal lives the rise and fall of therapeutic regimes and the replacement of early hopes by grim, geriatric resignation.

Colin Douglas has already established a reputation as a witty correspondent from sections of the medical front with ribald tales of doctors' pécadilloes. So what is new about his latest communication? The answer lies in his intention and his scope. This is definitely meant to be "the big one". Love, ambition petty jealousies, power struggles, suicide, and despair fill its pages. It can be read simply for entertainment and for the curious characters and tyrants it depicts. The Job Interview, The Class Reunion and, especially, The Ward Round are in this category. They epitomise the suffering, sarcasm, and embarrassment such occasions entail.

Does this frothy local drama get beyond the substance of hospital soap, the kind of thing which is perennially popular with potential

patients? In fact, this endoscopic view of NHS gut reactions does go further. A serious message drives the laser beams under Douglas's direction. He is firmly on the side of the angels, ever attentive to the vulnerable patient's view, from bed or operating table, surrounded by ambitious consultants and obsequious house officers.

It was the French philosopher Foucault who described "the birth of the clinic", where doctors could conveniently observe their subjects. As he contemplates the demise of an ideal and envisages the demolition of a familiar city landmark Colin Douglas has become a Scotch master of the cynical clinical gaze.

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Short Reviews

Health Care UK 1991. Ed Anthony Harrison. (Pp 146; £19.50.) King's Fund Institute, London. ISBN 0-946967 38 5.

This annual publication carries articles on many important health issues of the day as well as providing authoritative descriptions of trends in parts of the health sector. A calendar listing of the important events of 1991 is followed by a critical account of the main policy changes. These include implementing the National Health Service and Community Care Act, public health strategy based on discussion of the consultative document "Health of the Nation", The Patient's Charter, and waiting lists. Other detailed comments cover such topics as minor surgery in general practice, auditing audit, and the European Community and United Kingdom health services. This is a useful publication for those concerned with health care policy in the United Kingdom.

The European Study of Referrals from Primary to Secondary Care (Occasional Paper 56). (Pp 75; £7.50.) The Royal College of General Practitioners, London, 1992. ISBN 0-85084 167 4.

Despite entry of the United Kingdom to the European Community, knowledge is quite limited on the ways in which general practice is organised in other European countries and in particular the interface between general practice and hospitals. This occasional paper describes a major comparative study of referrals which has been carried out across Europe. The research was masterminded by the Birmingham Research Unit of the Royal College of General Practitioners and involved General Practitioners and specialists from 15 European countries. The report highlights many similarities and differences; in the United Kingdom, for example, patients wait longer to see specialists than in any other country in Europe.

EPISOURCE: A Guide to resources in Epidemiology. Eds Roger H Bernier, Virginia M Mason. (Pp 1100; \$89.95.) The Epidemiology Monitor, Rosewell, GA, USA. (No ISBN)

This resource book for epidemiologists is published by the editors of *Epidemiology Monitor* and contains more than 900 listings of individual products and services relevant to the epidemiologist. It contains information on such topics as epidemiology associations, awards, books, consultants, degree programmes, funding sources, journals, research centres, software, etc. Although somewhat biased towards North America, it is not exclusively so and is a useful reference book for epidemiologists to have on their shelves.

GERRY FOWKES

NOTICES

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 1992: 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 55445-0139, 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. Abstracts by 31 October 1991. Further details from INRS (attn C Skornik), 4^e Colloque du Comité Recherche, 30 rue Olivier-Noyer, 75680 Paris Cedex 14, France.