

variability in findings threw doubt on their value. Roche, who has worked on the Fels study for most of his career, candidly describes both the problems as well as the achievements in the history of this long term study, including its rescue on two occasions from intellectual stagnation—once in a re-orientation in the 1950s when the value of the archive was recognised not only as a detailed and wide ranging data collection of information, but also as a resource for hypothesis testing; and again in 1976 when work began on risk factors for cardiovascular disease.

This book summarises the study's most consistent strands of work, on growth, maturation, and development, as well as the findings on risk factors for cardiovascular illness. The main purpose of the work was the study of individual development, and there was much less work on secular trends. The book provides an invaluable bibliography of published material on these topics.

The Fels study, like most of the other American developmental investigations begun at the same time, for example the Berkeley and Oakland growth studies, has also been used since the 1960s for social and psychological studies. Although discussed disappointingly little in this volume, between them these studies did indeed show the powerful effects of the great American depression on the physical and mental health, development and wellbeing of children, and the long term effects on adult life of the experience of such adversity in childhood.

M E J WADSWORTH
MRC National Survey of
Health and Development,
University College and Middlesex Medical
School, London.

Personality, Elevated Blood Pressure, and Essential Hypertension. Eds E H Johnson, W D Gentry, and S Julius. (Pp 344; £42.00) Hemisphere Publishing, Washington, 1992. ISBN 1-56032-142-3

This book is the latest in a series of publications on health psychology and behavioural medicine. It aims to bring together research into personality factors, cardiovascular reactivity, and hypertension, and should therefore be of interest to many different groups.

It is divided into four sections, the first of which describes methods of measuring personality, including questionnaires and interview techniques, and examines studies that have shown a link between personality and hypertension. Several chapters concentrate specifically on the measurement of anger and type A personality, but there is unfortunately little mention of blood pressure measurement and its associated problems, particularly observer variability. The second section of the book focuses on the role of stress induced cardiovascular reactivity in blood pressure research, describing the changes in blood pressure that occur during everyday activities, and how these may predict the development of essential hypertension. The third section discusses pathophysiological mechanisms linking personality factors and blood pressure, concentrating particularly on the possible roles of sympathetic tone and insulinaemia, and how these pathways might be affected by

dental meditation. A discussion of how these factors might be affected by personality and whether the relationship is one of cause or effect is included in the final section. The final section also considers possible confounding factors and outlines areas of future research. It includes a comprehensive definition of personality that might more usefully have been included in the first chapter.

In general, the book seems to have been well researched and represents a comprehensive overview of information obtained from a variety of different specialities. It might be criticised for some repetition and a lack of continuity, but it should be a useful text for anyone concerned with cardiovascular disease research who is interested in the underlying mechanisms and regulatory responses associated with personality factors.

GILLIAN LENG
Department of Public Health Sciences,
University of Edinburgh, EH8 9AG.

The Childhood Environment and Adult Disease. Ciba Foundation Symposium 156. (Pp 234; £39.50) Chichester, Wiley and Sons, 1991. ISBN 0-471929573.

There is much merit in bringing together an interdisciplinary group of researchers with a common interest, in this case the importance of early life events in determining adult disease. However, the success or failure of such an enterprise is dependent on finding a "common" language. The proceedings of this symposium on the whole succeeds in being accessible to readers from different disciplines, although at times is fairly heavy going. Both observational epidemiological as well as animal experimental evidence is presented. The various strands of evidence are tied together under the concept of "programming", a process whereby an abnormality in a "critical period" leads to irreversible damage that persists into adulthood. This concept is most elegantly illustrated by the work of Blakemore and the effects of visual deprivation. However, alternative explanations exist to explain the associations between abnormalities in early life and adult disease. As Barker points out (p204), an adverse effect in early life may simply increase vulnerability in later life, hence the importance of an interaction between effects acting throughout an individual's life. This idea is elaborated in the chapter by Michael Rutter on the psychosocial consequences of early experience. Mott *et al* also present interesting data on how both infant and adult diets in baboons affect bile acid excretion and cholesterol production. In addition abnormalities in early life may simply be a marker of later adverse effects. To overcome confounding it is necessary to either undertake experimental studies or obtain observational data on unusual populations where this confounding is broken.

From the epidemiological perspective this book has largely been overtaken by successive publications from the Southampton group, but it still contains an interesting collection of basic science research. Such work is essential to generate more specific hypotheses on the possible mechanisms by which early life factors may play a long term role in disease aetiology.

YOAV BEN-SHLOMO

Short reviews

AIDS up to the year 2000. Epidemiological, Sociocultural, and Economic Scenario Analysis for the Netherlands. Steering Committee on Future Health Scenarios. (Pp 314; £52.00) Dordrecht, Kluwer, 1992. ISBN 0-7923-1895-1.

The epidemiological, sociocultural and economic scenario of AIDS in the Netherlands is discussed in this publication produced by an expert committee. The main purpose is to project the impact of AIDS up to the year 2000 accounting for significant changes in such diverse fields as sexual behaviour, drug use, the effectiveness and organisation of AIDS prevention programmes, and the demand for delivery of care. This book should be of interest to those involved in the planning of services for AIDS.

Current Issues in Cancers. Ed G M Mead. (Pp 147; £9.95.) British Medical Journal, London, 1992. ISBN 9-780727-907752

Oncologists describe today's practice and what is known about the biology of various cancers. Some of the most common cancers such as lung, early breast, and colorectal cancers are covered as are rare diseases such as Hodgkin's lymphoma which may act as models for research in other cancers. Detailed but readable this book provides valuable information for those who are not specialists and perhaps epidemiologists who wish to know more about the present state of knowledge of cancer and its management.

If you wish to order or require further information regarding the titles reviewed here, please write to or telephone the BMJ Bookshop, PO Box 295, London WC1H 9JR. Tel: 071 383 6244. Fax 071 383 6662. Books are supplied post free in the UK and for BFPO addresses. Overseas customers should add 15% for postage and packing. Payment can be made by cheque in sterling drawn on a UK bank or by credit card (Mastercard, Visa, or American Express) stating the card number, expiry date, and full name. (The price and availability are occasionally subject to revision by the publishers.)

NOTICE

Making New Friends: The Public Health Challenge in Primary Care. A one day conference organised by the Public Health Alliance for all those interested in the purchase and provision of health promotion in primary care will take place in Birmingham on 6 July 1993. Contact address: The Public Health Alliance, Room 204, Snow Hill House, 10-15 Livery Street, Birmingham B3