It lists a catalogue of misuse surrounding a specific category of medicines, those for anxiety and insomnia, and gives examples of their over-prescription without proper drug trials. It highlights the fact that caffeine, anxiolytics, from alcohol in the mid-19th century to the benzodiazepines of today, has been surpassed by drugs thought to be infinitely superior with no addictive tendency and yet this has not been found to be true. It questions whether the 1990s will be so very different.

In general, the public are confused about medicines. Even with over the counter headache tablets, patients' comprehension of the side-effects is often minimal. Some reach for the packet at the slightest hint of a headache, others would prefer to retire to bed and sweat it out because they "don't like taking tablets". Additional information for consumers, one of the aims of this book, must be a good thing.

The book certainly focuses on the negative side of the industry but perhaps this is a good thing when the industry itself may tend to mislead patients with its expensive advertising.

Overall, I found the book enjoyable and easy to read. It achieves a combination of the history of diseases and field findings followed by suggestions and a call for radical change in the future.

CATHERY ALLISON
Northallerton, North Yorkshire


Moran and Wood have produced an interesting and surprisingly readable text on subject matter which in other hands could have proved tedious. Their avowed target audience of "students, both of medicine and of social science" would certainly benefit from reading this book, but then so did I. I suspect we are not the only consultant unaware of the important and complicated links that exist between the practice of medicine and state regulations.

The main argument of the book can be fairly simply summarised. It is that "nations make a difference". Not in the form of traditional national stereotypes but in the way that a state's history and traditions influence in significant ways the relationship that state has with its professions, including medicine.

The authors confine themselves largely to the examples of the US, UK, and Germany. This is perhaps a shame, however, it does allow them to look at these three contrasting systems in some detail. They examine not only the differences that exist but also those goals of the medical profession that seem universal.

Throughout, the authors present their arguments logically and coherently. Indeed the disciplined structure of the book, working as it does through the development, anatomy, process, and outcome of regulation gives it a thesis-like feel. I found this quite satisfactory—others may disagree.

In summary, I'm glad I read this book and will be pleased to keep my review copy to hand as I suspect I will both quote from it and recommend it to others.

PETER DONNELLY
Consultant Senior Lecturer,
University of Wales College of Medicine


For ethical and practical reasons, researchers in human behaviourial genetics cannot experimentally manipulate their subjects, and must therefore use complex modeling and path-analytical approaches in order to tease out the relative contributions of genes and environment to multifactorial traits. This book aims to teach researchers how to analyse and interpret twin and family data that have long provided the basic data for these approaches. The treatment is limited to linear structural models and is strongly biased towards the use of LISREL software, without access to which the reader's understanding would be severely restricted. It was written largely on the basis of the authors' experience in running a series of week-long workshops on twin methodology.

How well it succeeds in its aims is debatable. Several key concepts are introduced in an exceedingly cursory fashion. This is not standard deviation field following the tradition of producing a book that provides a comprehensive and generally lucid overview of the capabilities of current path-analytical techniques. For these reasons the book will probably succeed better as a course text than as a stand-alone introduction for researchers without a strong statistical background. A minor irritant is the small font size which, at 500 words to the page, makes prolonged reading very unpleasant.

A D CAROTHERS
MRC Human Genetics Unit,
Edinburgh, Scotland


Accidents are everyone's business—both because we are all at risk, and the prevention of accidents requires social and political change. Gordon Avery and Hugh Jackson have been writing and lecturing on accidents for many years, and Jane Bishop, their ghost coauthor, has collated, expanded, and developed their notes into a book. Child accidents are described by place (road, playground etc) and character (falls, burns etc) and there are chapters on non-accidental injury and prevention. There are no text references, but a general bibliography. The audience, while not indicated by the authors, would seem to be the interested public and schools.


One of my first experiences as a clinical student was of the huge impact of the pharmaceutical company via the drug lunch. Their immense resources and glossy presentation had an immediate effect on me. At the start of what I hope to be a long medical career I found this book a very interesting read. It has helped to highlight for me the power of prescribing and will, I hope, make me look more carefully at what I give and at whose recommendation.