grammes. The background papers and the summaries of the 4 discussion groups' deliberations make a sustained plea to participating governments and to the WHO to take "research" more seriously.

Who then could profit from this translation of the "technical discussions" into book form? The politicians and bureaucrats of potentially defaulting governments may have been stimulated on this theme by their participation in the World Health Assembly but its hard to imagine that the turgid prose of this publication will stimulate action where direct participation has failed.

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Preventing Cancers. Eds T Heller, L Bailey, S Pattison. (Pp 216; £35.00hb £12.99pb) Open University Press Buckingham: 1992. ISBN 0-335-19003-0.

Preventing Cancers is an ambitious title and the formal aim of the book and of the associated Open University Course (P578 – Reducing The Risk of Cancers) is to "help health professionals and policy makers throughout Europe and beyond to understand many of the elements of effective cancer prevention". The book is a further development from the sister volume entitled *Reducing the Risk of Cancers* edited by Heller, Davey, and Bailey and both books have been produced under the Europe Against Cancer initiative.

The book is divided into four main parts. The first two parts focus on the ways of studying and identifying the causes of cancer; the second two parts look at ways of preventing cancers by using case studies. In the main, I found all the chapters were well written and had many points of interest in them. Some of the topics by their very nature are less interesting than others but their inclusion is merited by the fact that to study cancer prevention involves many types of study and perspectives. Chapters, for example, on "The reliability of cancer data" and "Food, policy and cancers" struck me as being the most uninspiring, whereas others, for example, on "What causes people to change their behaviour" and "Stress and psychological aspects of cancer" were particularly interesting. One comment worth making here is that the "old chestnuts" of cancer epidemiology, that is, smoking and cancer, and melanoma and sunlight, were

given good consideration and a new edge put on what seem like old and established stories.

So, overall, this was a very good book with many interesting and new points relating to this multi-factorial and multi-faceted problem. One of the over-riding observations, however, is one of complexity both at the level of knowledge pertaining to different issues and also to that of changing peoples' behaviours, even once sufficient reliable knowledge has been accrued. Furthermore, by considering cancers in isolation then any changes recommended in lifestyle or other behaviours may actually be counter to the general public good if they are inconsistent with lifestyle changes necessary to reduce the incidence of other major diseases.

In conclusion, I am sure that people from each of the previous mentioned target groups will benefit from reading this volume in terms of increasing their factual knowledge but whether present knowledge is sufficient to actually reduce the incidence of cancers remains to be seen.

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Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles. By A M Johnson, J Wadsworth, K Wellings, and J Field. (Pp 449; £29.50 (hbk), £15.00 (pbk)) Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications, 1994. ISBN: 0-632-03343-6.

It was Alex Comfort, in his writings before the *Joy of Sex* became a best seller, who speculated on what our nutritional and dietetic advice would look like if the anxiety which our culture focuses on reproduction were to be transferred to food. Thirty years later things may at last be beginning to change, but not without a struggle. This volume is the report of the first large scale population based survey of sexual attitudes and behaviour to be carried out in Great Britain. It makes fascinating reading.

Of particular interest is the account of the political battle which was fought with the ostrich tendency. In this the prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, herself seems to have had a lead role in the attempts to avoid moving towards a knowledge based approach to policies for sexual health. Other analysts may wish to return to this story in the future because within it lies a crucial issue of knowledge, power, and control which goes to the heart of different philosophies of democracy and the imperatives of public health.

For the time being what we have is a most rigorous attempt to establish a robust methodology and a baseline with which we can

begin to construct sound public health policies. In large part, these workers have been successful and for that both ourselves and future generations should all be grateful. We have here a wealth of valuable information some of which challenges myth, rumour, and fantasy while other consolidates what common sense tells us – that most people are trying in a responsible way to live their lives enriched by sexual expression.

The central weakness of incomplete population coverage remains. Despite the rigorous methodology and the high response rate (mid 60%) in this area above all else we need to know much more about the non-responder. If it was deemed too sensitive to ask the respondents about masturbation, and if, as was the case, there are indications that respondents were unwilling to admit to certain sexual behaviours; if, as we know, the distribution curve of behaviour is skewed with a smallish group being much more sexually active and diverse than the rest then we must try and find out about the 35% about whom we know so little. This is a very hard challenge!

So all credit to the team for making such a sound start. What is now needed is for others to respond and to develop creatively further methods to build on these solid foundations.

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Also received ...

Medical Knowledge: Doubt and Certainty. Edited by Clive Seale and Stephen Pattison. (Pp 150; £12.99). Buckingham: Open University Press, 1994. ISBN: 0-35-19251-3.

Research Strategies in Human Biology. Edited by GW Lasker and CGN Masciel-Taylor. (Pp 204; £37.50). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993. ISBN: 0-251-43188-3.

HIV Epidemiology: Models and Methods. Edited by Alfredo Nicolosi. (Pp 383; \$107.50). New York: Raven Press, 1993. ISBN: 0-7817-0118-X.

Report of the 1993 Conference of European Community Parliamentarians on HIV/AIDS. Church House Conference Centre, Westminster, London, 23–24 April 1993. (Pp 74). London: British All-Party Parliamentary Group on AIDS, 1994.

An Introduction to the Bootstrap (Monographs on Statistics and Applied Probability 57). Bradley Efron, Robert J Tibshirani. (Pp 436; \$49.95). New York: Chapman and Hall. ISBN: 0-412-04231-2.