of definitions of measures of attributable-risk found among the textbooks.

This is a very important work. Practitioners and students of epidemiology and related disciplines would be well advised to have it easily at hand for ready reference. The epidemiological community must surely owe a great debt to Professor Last, his editorial colleagues and the many others who contributed. A fourth edition is planned. In the meantime we must keep the language of epidemiology precise and alive.

A S ST LEGER
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Pharmacoepidemiology (2nd ed) Brian L. Strom (ed). (Pp xvii + 741 pp; £75.00) Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 1994.

This comprehensive book on pharmacoepidemiology involves the contributions of 59 authors in addition to the editor Brian Strom. The book aims to be both a reference source and a textbook, and it indeed fulfils both roles admirably. For those new to the subject area there is a thorough introduction section which forms part 1 of the book defining "What is pharmacoepidemiology?". This discusses when studies should be conducted and what study designs are available. There are also a couple of very practical chapters on the basic principals of clinical pharmacology which are relevant to the pharmacoepidemiologist, and a section on sample size considerations which is supplemented by tables as an appendix to the book. Part 2 of the book includes perspectives on pharmacoepidemiology from academia, industry, regulatory agencies, and the court room. These sections are all written by authors from the United States and relate almost exclusively to that country. This is particularly true about the chapter on legal aspects. A substantial amount of the book is devoted to reviewing the systems for collecting information on drug use which are available for conducting studies. This section is more international, including a chapter on substance reporting systems outside the United States and whole chapters devoted to data collection systems in, for example, Scotland, The Netherlands, and Canada. Of particular interest to those already working in the area will be section 4 which considers specific methodological issues in the field including economic evaluation of pharmaceuticals, quality of life measurements, n-of-1 randomised clinical trials, and the use of meta-analysis. There is a particularly clear and well written chapter on the important issues of bias and confounding. Finally, the editor devotes a chapter to his personal views of the future of the subject.

This is a quite superb book, useful to both the novice and the experienced epidemiologist alike. It is well laid out and written in a style which makes the reading enjoyable. I could find few typographical errors and the index is extensive. For those working the area, and especially if only intermittently, this will be an invaluable source of information and one well worth persuading your local librarian to purchase.

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Alcohol, cocaine, and accidents (Drug and Alcohol Abuse Reviews, Vol 7) Ronald R Watson (ed). (Pp 230; \$69.00) Humana Press, 1995. ISBN 0-89603-294-9.

This is one of a series of multi-author American texts which have covered various aspects of addictions, the subject here being the role of alcohol and drugs in causing accidents.

All chapters but one concern alcohol, and the main themes are the prevalence of alcohol use prior to car, air, or aquatic accidents, mechanisms of adverse effects of alcohol on performance, preventative strategies, and clinical treatment of offenders and at risk individuals. There is some consideration of the effectiveness of media campaigns, while drink driving is examined in various sections, from adolescent attitudes through to the effectiveness of clinical treatment and novel measures such as car ignition devices which can check blood alcohol levels. Other aspects right up to date include the issue of liability of barpersons who have served intoxicated individuals. There are the usual overwhelming statistics linking alcohol use to driving impairment, but much of the work reviewed here suggests some hopeful signs emerging from changing attitudes and behaviours. As in alcohol and drug abuse generally, prevention is clearly preferable to having to resort to clinical treatment. The problems of young people receive attention, ranging from situations such as having to ride home with an impaired driver, to the particularly reckless driving behaviours where alcohol abuse is associated with other deviant characteristics.

Given that only one drug is considered here, cocaine is a good choice. Crack cocaine is strongly associated with violence given the acutely psychotic effects, the nature of the withdrawal effects, and the high stakes in dealing and criminal activity. Its contribution to American murder rates and rates of accidental injuries is re-examined here along with some clinical aspects.

There is much interesting information on alcohol and accidents contained in this book, and anyone involved with the subject in advisory or other capacities is unlikely to find a better reference source.

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Concern for Europe's Tomorrow. Health and the Environment in the WHO European Region. WHO European Centre for Health and the Environment (ed). (Pp 537; DM/SFr 156) Stuttgart: Regional Office for Europe WHO, 1995. ISBN 3-8047-1406-4.

This book contains the findings of the major study undertaken by the WHO European Centre for Environment and Health. The centre was asked during the preparation for the Second European Conference on Environment and Health, held in June 1994, to assess all aspects of environmental health in the countries of the European Region. The outcome of this assessment is contained in this report, which is unique in that it presents for the first time a Europe-wide picture of environmental health, set out in a readily readable and accessible form within one volume.

The 19 chapters are divided into three parts. The first introduces and discusses the

factors influencing the state of the environment, such as economic activity and environmental management, as well as profiling the state of human health across Europe. The middle section presents and discusses the detail of the nature and extent of environmental exposure, with the final chapters concerned with analysis, discussion and the recommendations of the findings of the survey.

This publication merits more than a casual glance, it is a useful source of reference which will be of value to a range of personnel for a range of purposes. Whether your interest is in the extent of acid deposition in the European Region, or in obtaining data about the effects on health of environmental exposure then this publication will be of value.

As the foreword states "this report is intended to be of assistance in rational decision making, so that real priorities may be identified and limited resources efficiently utilised." I think it ably provides that assistance.

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Human variability and plasticity. CGN Mascie-Taylor and Barry Brogin (eds). (Pp 241; £35.00) Cambridge; Cambridge University, 1995. ISBN 0-521-45399-2.

This stimulating book reminds us how limiting can be the vision of even such an exciting construct as the human genome. Variability and plasticity are defined biologically as "evolutionary processes additional to natural selection by which organisms achieve long-term adaptation to their environments". As Garuto remarks, "it is one of the few remaining multi-disciplinary sciences in today's reductionist scientific world".

Rich sources for the investigation of plasticity have been the changes in anthropometrics and behaviour of populations, especially migrant populations. Most familiar to medical epidemiologists will be the changes in morbidity and mortality to be found in such communities as Japanese Americans. However, the concepts of variability and plasticity provide a richer substrate in which the work of such as Barker, on the transgenerational effects of maternal nutrition, may be seen.

In "reductionist" terms we are thus in the world of biological bias and confounding. As another author, Schell, observes, "barriers to use (of the adaptability paradigm) include non-standardised terminology . . .". Paradoxically, this confusion, looked at from "outside", may offer us the chance of developing a more sophisticated way of considering variables which create "noise" in our scientific studies. This is perhaps not the intention of the book but may nevertheless give it a wider readership!

Whilst the ideas are stimulating, the language, as has already been remarked, has something of Lewis Carroll's Red Queen in it and also suffers at times from almost impenetrable denseness. This may in part explain why another theme running through the text is that of valedictory for the seeming demise of a subject which offered so much and yet appears to have influenced so little.

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