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
Associate Editor JECH


This comprehensive book on pharmacoepidemiology involves the contributions of 59 authors, selected by 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 pharmacueticals, 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 pharmacoepidemiology in the elderly. 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 epideimiologist 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.

GARY MACFARLANE
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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 begin with 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 adolescence to old age 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 behaviors. 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 advice or other capacities is unlikely to find a better reference source.

NICHOLAS SEIVEWRIGHT
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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 European Region. The countries identified as having problems of environmental health, in terms of the extent and range of exposure, were the subject of this study.

There is a clear outline of all aspects of the environment and health with a section on the public’s perception. Each country then has a section which provides an overview of the environmental health situation as it stands. The final section, with a worrying message, is the section on health and the environment.

The book is a valuable resource for anyone interested in the effects of pollution on health and an important work for the standards of the research it contains. The results of the work are likely to influence the shape of environmental policy around Europe in the years to come.

A J M SLOVAK
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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 choose long-term adaptation to their environments". As Garfuto remarks, "it is one of the few remaining multidisciplinary sciences in today’s re-educationist 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 developmental 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 the 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 understanding the 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 obfuscation. The tentative part explains why another theme running through the text is that of valdecoric for the seditious demise of a subject which offered so much and yet appears to have influenced so little.