International Course ‘Modern Epidemiology’, 12–15 May 1997, in Lunteren, The Netherlands. Advanced course in principles of epidemiology, topics include case-control research principles, interaction in etiology, statistics vs epidemiologic analyses. For further information, contact: Mrs Astrid van Alst, Course Secretary, Department of Epidemiology, University of Nijmegen, PO Box 9101, NL-6500 HB Nijmegen, The Netherlands. Tel: +31-24-3619132. Fax: +31-24-3613505. Email: A.VanAlst@mont.kun.nl.

17th International Colloquium, ISSA Chemistry Section, Plant Safety in the Chemical Industry, 9–11 June 1997 in Frankfurt/Main, Germany. For further information: Secretariat of the ISSA Chemistry Section, c/o BC Chemie, Kurfürsten-Anlage 62, D-69115 Heidelberg, Germany. Tel: +49 6221 523 498. Fax: +49 6221 523 420.


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 useful 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 courtroom. These sections are all written 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 which 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 paragraphs of criticism and the index provided to the book 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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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 caused by 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, prevention of alcohol 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, to 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 changes emerging from changing attitudes and behaviours. As in alcohol and drug abuse generally, prevention is clearly preferable to having to resort to clinical treatment of 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 giving the user severe psychotic effects, a number 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 the one involved with the subject in advisory or other capacities is unlikely to find a better reference source.

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