

## Basic Epidemiology

By R. Beaglehole, R. Bonita and T. Kjellström. Pp. viii + 174. (in English, French and Spanish in preparation). \$19,40. Geneva: WHO. 1993. Order No. 1150395. ISBN 92-4-154446-5.

The demand for coursework and training in epidemiology is a relatively recent phenomenon that has grown rapidly in the past five years. Interest in the subject now extends well beyond the medical profession to allied health and public health professionals.

*Basic Epidemiology*, published by the World Health Organisation, meets these needs by setting its sights on a wide readership. It emphasises modifiable environmental factors and the use of epidemiology in health promotion, disease prevention, the optimal use of health resources and clinical practice. It covers the material expected in an introductory text with brevity, and makes for comfortable reading.

Of interest is a section devoted to epidemiology, health services and health policy, which introduces currently popular notions of effectiveness and efficiency, as well as suggesting how epidemiology might make more of an impact on public policy.

I can recommend the text for local use in undergraduate and short postgraduate courses, although it should be supplemented by examples drawn from local studies and by expansion of the biostatistics section. The text ends with a guide to carrying out a practical student project, and encouragement to read and develop further in epidemiology. Hopefully, there will be plenty of takers.

R. EHRLICH

## A Pocket Book of Social and Community Paediatrics

By Jo Sibert. Pp. viii + 164. London: Edward Arnold. 1992. ISBN 0-340-54929-7.

To write a book is a labour of love, and the motivation to do so must be powerful indeed when others have trodden the same path before you. You must have something different to say, or believe you can say it better. In the case of manuals and pocket books on child health/community/social paediatrics, there are at least three from the UK with which to compare this publication. They aim to describe concisely how doctors, nurses and other health care professionals can deal with most of the social and community problems they encounter.

This book is clearly intended for use only in Great Britain. The best chapters are those relating to the social end of the child health spectrum — the law and the new Children Act of 1989 — and divorce, separation and the child, could be singled out. The author's special field of interest is injury prevention, and this chapter is comprehensive. Resources and organisations dealing with children

with special needs are listed.

On the negative side, I had the impression that the book was put together hurriedly, perhaps from lecture notes. The writing is often tortuous, and there are not a few grammatical errors. The chapters dealing with clinical aspects such as behavioural and non-organic problems, enuresis and soiling are so skimpy that one cannot see them being of any use to the practising professional. Better are those covering developmental, hearing and vision testing, but given the compact format of this book, this material would lend itself better to tables and diagrams — the latter are completely absent. Considering that the book was completed in 1991 the omission of any mention of HIV infection is astonishing.

Community health services for children are a particularly strong aspect of the British National Health Service, and the book is useful if only to indicate to local professionals the scope and range of services for which we should be striving. However, it has little to recommend it over two excellent volumes already available, except that it does cover the new legislation.

M. A. KIBEL

## Knowledge Beats Cancer

By Albert Stegmann Alberts. Pp. 226. Illustrated. R55,45. Pretoria: Haum Tertiary. 1993. ISBN 0-7986-3196-1.

This publication is a welcome addition to the body of literature available to the cancer community and should be most useful to medical personnel and cancer patients when they sort out problems. The book covers all aspects relevant to the dilemmas faced by newly diagnosed cancer patients and their families, friends and caregivers, and answers the questions: what is cancer; what are the treatment options; what exactly are clinical trials; what about my personal life; what if treatment fails? Survival rates are presented in a factual and non-threatening way, and the necessity of encouraging patients to preserve normal relationships as part of a successful programme is emphasised. Diagrams and tables are few, but clear and appropriate.

There are many other publications available on this subject, but *Knowledge Beats Cancer* has a South African flavour, which is its best drawcard. It will appeal to everyone who wants to be fully informed about cancer and is not frightened by medical jargon, and to medical specialists who need to find a 'common ground' of communication with patients not familiar with cancer. It is also available in Afrikaans under the title *Kennis Klop Kanker*.

Should a second edition be planned, possibly updating the medical information when necessary, the inclusion of a chapter on the role of the traditional healer and the accommodation of cultural differences would be a brave addition to consider!

C. JEFFREY

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## BOOKS / BOEKE

**AIDS and Your Response**

Pp. vi + 226. R49,50. ISBN 0-620-17319-X.

A conference covering a comprehensive range of AIDS-related issues, with a moral and church connotation, was held in Midrand in November 1992. This book provides a reprint of the papers and the closing synthesis of the conference. It includes a particularly wide range of papers covering areas such as the epidemiology of AIDS, experiences from other African countries, socio-economic impact, legal issues, the role and responsibility of the church, responses of government and local authorities, workplace issues, education, care and support, and community perceptions and responses. Most of the papers are provided by individuals and organisations with much AIDS experience and knowledge and thus provide an insightful overview of the AIDS problem as it will affect South Africa.

The book will be of particular interest to church leaders and organisations, and to individuals and organisations active in the AIDS prevention and educational effort.

The response towards the AIDS epidemic requires a concerted community effort, and the book provides some useful insights into the nature of the necessary response, particularly from a Christian church perspective. But many of the papers are of general interest and will appeal to all sectors of the community.

C. EVIAN

**Principles for Evaluating Chemical Effects on the Aged Population. Environmental Health Criteria. No. 144**

Pp. 159. (English only). \$20,50. Geneva: WHO. 1993. Order No. 1160144. ISBN 92-4-1571446.

This volume in the series on environmental health criteria stands out because it does not discuss a single chemical substance or a group of related compounds. It attempts to devise principles on how to evaluate effects of environmental chemical substances (pollutants) on aged populations (or elderly individuals) regarded as at high risk because of susceptibility to suffer adverse effects. The United Nations definition of 'aged' as being 60 or more years old is used here.

The book may be of interest to gerontologists, geriatricians and toxicologists more than to practitioners in the field of medicine, community medicine, public health and occupational medicine. It contains theoretical considerations rather than practical guidelines. Chapter 2, which deals with structural and physiological changes in the aged is informative but not very detailed or specific. Chapter 3 is titled 'Basis of altered sensitivity to environmental chemicals' and describes, in mostly general terms, changes with

age in pharmacokinetics, pharmacodynamics and the effect of modifying factors such as nutrition, smoking and alcohol intake.

Chapter 4 describes tentative, mainly epidemiological, approaches to evaluating effects of environmental chemicals and drugs. The last paragraph of chapter 6 sums it all up neatly: 'The effects of environmental chemicals on the processes of ageing remain to be evaluated!'

This volume would be of limited interest but is still worth reading rather than buying for the categories of health professionals mentioned above.

J. T. METS

**The Guide to Heart Sounds: Normal and Abnormal**

(A 90-minute audio-cassette with illustrated workbook.) By Donald W. Novey, Marcia Pencak and John M. Stang. Audio-cassette narrated by: Donald W. Novey. Pp. xi + 74. Illustrated. Florida: CRC Press. 1988. ISBN 0-8493-0153-X.

The teaching of cardiac auscultation is usually carried out at the bedside, particularly in countries where clinical material is abundant, such as in South Africa. Nevertheless, a few teaching aids, primarily in the form of audio-cassettes are available. This is such an example and is most welcome.

Both normal and abnormal sounds are covered concisely. Most of the material consists of artificially produced sounds, which appear genuine to the experienced clinician. An attractive feature of the teaching aid is the breakdown of the various components of an auscultatory complex and its subsequent reconstitution. The text closely follows the audiocassette, which is technically clear despite the fact that the volume of the tape recorder has to be set at a high level.

The most important sounds and murmurs are analysed. Complete heart block is poorly discussed in that there is no emphasis on the varying intensity of the first heart sound. And no mention is made of the vibratory mid-systolic murmur, or the intermittent short mid-diastolic atrial ventricular flow murmur produced by atrial contraction co-inciding with the phase of rapid diastolic filling and reminiscent of the Austin-Flint murmur of aortic regurgitation. Since prosthetic cardiac valves are now commonly encountered in clinical practice, the educational value of the teaching aid could have been enhanced by the addition of a few such examples.

This audio-cassette and its accompanying workbook can be highly recommended for the medical undergraduate. Advanced postgraduate students would benefit more by referring to aids in which pathophysiological mechanisms are discussed in greater depth.

J. PRZYBOJEWSKI



Can you rely on inspiratory flow rate?

## BOOKS / BOEKE

### **Propachlor. Environmental Health Criteria. No. 147**

Pp. 110. (English, French and Spanish summaries). \$17.30. Geneva: WHO. 1993. Order No. 1160147. ISBN 92-4-157147-0.

This volume deals with a herbicide, propachlor (a derivative of acetanilide), which has been in use since 1965 and is marketed under trade names such as Acylide, Nitricide, Satecid and Ramrod. Its use, mostly as wettable powder, alone or in combination with other herbicides, is mainly to control annual grasses, some weeds in crops such as sorghum, corn and flax, and for pumpkin and flower growing.

The main adverse effect to humans is reported as dermatitis. In general, its toxicity for mammals and birds is low. Calves may be subject to adverse effects because they may not be able to metabolise propachlor.

Aquatic organisms, especially rainbow trout and some kinds of catfish are susceptible to toxic effects, but no accumulation in living organisms has been reported. In soil, half-lives of up to 3 weeks have been found.

There are few available data on occupational exposure and none on exposure of general populations. As is usual for this series, the information given on chemical properties, kinetics, metabolism distribution, transport and transformation in the environment (chapters 2 and 4) is useful for anybody intending to use propachlor.

The description of effects on laboratory animals and other organisms (chapter 7 and 9) gives warnings and some guidance as to which protective measures should be taken by users, and to medical advisers.

The volume would be of use to prospective users, their medical advisers, and academic departments of horticulture and agriculture, and occupational medicine.

J. T. METS

### **Quality Assurance in Health Care: A Handbook**

By Roger Ellis and Dorothy Whittington. London: Edward Arnold. 1993. ISBN 0-340-55273-5.

South Africa lags far behind the developed world in applying the principles of quality assurance to health care. The nursing profession in this country has recognised the importance of the concept and its application but their medical colleagues have generally resisted its introduction into their practice.

Yet there is little doubt that quality assurance programmes are an essential component of health care delivery, particularly when resources are diminishing and cost containment is mandatory. Quality assurance or total quality management, incorporating medical audit, provides a tool for setting standards, for measuring, comparing and evaluating the process and outcome of health care, and emphasises the need for accreditation of health care institutions. All stakeholders, from health care providers to managers of health services to patients and their families, should be involved in the development and use of quality assurance methodologies and in linking them to organisational development.

This book is a valuable addition to the rapidly growing literature on the subject. It reviews the history and purpose of quality assurance and explores the relationship between cost and quality. The essential parameters of health care quality assurance are defined and compared with similar programmes in an industrial setting. Specific techniques, generic and particular, are described in detail and almost overwhelming complexity with a plethora of obscure and confusing acronyms.

I read with relief the chapter on management of quality assurance in health because it provided directions out of the maze. The need to take into account the difficulties of overcoming the medical profession's resistance to quality assurance is addressed, highlighting the 'arcane processes for professional induction and discipline, which enhance their concern for maintenance of high standards but also militate against their involvement in the open and explicit process of quality assurance'. This section is particularly helpful in providing a framework for total quality management and guidelines on how to introduce it in a health care organisation.

With minor reservations, this is a useful book, comprehensive and well written with extensive references, glossary of terms and a detailed index. Anyone concerned with the provision of health care should read it.

J. KANE-BERMAN

### **Rehabilitation after Cardiovascular Diseases, with Special Emphasis on Developing Countries**

Report of a WHO expert committee. Technical Report Series No 831. Pp. viii + 122 (available in English, French and Spanish in preparation). Geneva: WHO. 1993. ISBN 92-4-120831-7.

This is a well-researched report covering almost every aspect of cardiac rehabilitation, and having particular relevance for cardiologists, physicians and health care workers in developing countries. The authors stress the fact that rehabilitation should be available to all patients with cardiac disease, and practical recommendations are given for the adaptation of programmes to match the needs and resources of each community. Methods for functional assessment and exercise regimens are described for three different levels of care, beginning with basic facilities within the community and progressing through hospital to advanced specialist facilities at tertiary centres. Practical advice is given for the assessment of patients for return to work and consideration is given to the type of labour performed in developing countries.

Dynamic exercise testing as a means for the diagnosis and evaluation of cardiac disease in children and young adults is well reviewed and there are supplementary tables covering exercise protocols, normal values of work capacity and exercise training programmes. A section is devoted to the rehabilitation of the severely disabled patient, with additional advice for patients with rheumatic valvular heart disease and cardiomyopathies, and the elderly. The authors quite rightly emphasise the need for adequate education and counselling in patients, and there are helpful suggestions for the effective and creative use of existing basic communication channels and of advanced technology for the purposes of counselling and education.

This is a worthy edition to the WHO technical report series and should be of use to anyone involved in cardiac rehabilitation.

B. BUCHANAN-LEE

### **Books received November 1993**

**Nervous System and Sensory Organs. Color Atlas/Text of Human Anatomy.** Vol 3. 4th ed. By Werner Kahle. Pp. vii + 376. Illustrated. Stuttgart: Georg Thieme Verlag. 1993. ISBN 0-86577-475-7.

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