

It is good to see plenty of reminders of the caution needed in making interpretations. There are clear accounts of the limitations of much of the data used, the problems of trying to determine histories of exposure to postulated environmental hazards in a mobile population. Practical considerations such as confidentiality become relevant when very small subdivisions of a population are used. There is no single solution for study design and analysis. Various statistical approaches are suggested which try to disentangle the coincidental from the possible associations which are worthy of further investigation. Methods are described for studies of fairly large areas and others concentrate on finely divided populations. The theory is often complex but there are plenty of well-presented examples.

This volume followed a scientific meeting organized by the WHO. There are additional, invited chapters from non-participants. The book is an excellent compilation of contributions from more than fifty authors. The editors have done a commendable job in ensuring a cohesive structure and remarkably consistent style. They either employed a firm control or were lucky in the selection of authors, or both.

The final sections of the book give case studies and these make fascinating reading. They all involve chronic diseases but it is not inconceivable that communicable disease epidemiologists might need to apply these methods to study, for example, rare illnesses thought to be infections of unknown source or diseases which remain endemic for unexplained reasons. This book is recommended as essential reading to anyone embarking on such a study, and as general interest reading to others.

H. E. TILLET

*Public Health Laboratory Service,  
Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre,  
London*

*Teaching Epidemiology. What you should know and what you could do.* JOHN OLSEN & DIMITRIOS TRICHOPOULOS, eds. Pp. 340. Oxford University Press; 1992. £40.00. ISBN 0 19 262205 6.

This book is a response to the expansion in the teaching of epidemiology. It is not aimed at teachers on established specialist courses but rather the organizers of in-service training or undergraduate teaching. Epidemiology is filtering through to many disciplines, as is confirmed by the great variety of topics covered such as dental, cancer, psychiatric, AIDS and occupational epidemiology and epidemiology in health services research. It begins with chapters on basics such as designing studies and applying statistics.

The book has been written by a committee, with individual members contributing a chapter on their topic. Much of it is informative. Most of it is readable with the exception of Chapter 3, written by the editorial board and entitled 'Principles of epidemiology'. This is inevitably full of technical terminology but the explanations are not in plain English and the reviewer found it hard to follow and felt it exemplified how not to teach. If this criticism encourages readers to rush out and buy the book in order to demonstrate their superior intellect than I hope the publishers will be duly grateful.

Some chapters are compiled to summarize what the teacher should know and to give ideas from which a course could be constructed. A particularly good example is Schach's 'Data collection and processing'. The chapter on cancer epidemiology concludes with a recommendation that teaching should be a mixture of formal lectures, informal seminars and 'learn-by-your-own-mistakes'. This last approach can be the most effective but it requires more time and an experienced and confident teacher. Unfortunately there are few examples for such exercises in this book, but there are some suggestions in the very approachable chapter by Reid on 'Epidemiology of infectious diseases and the study of outbreaks'.

As with most epidemiology textbooks there is a preponderance of chronic disease examples; more discussion of communicable diseases would have enriched the general chapters on design and analysis. Indeed the most inspiring chapter, Florey's 'Teaching the reluctant student' demonstrates the fascination and success stories of epidemiology by using historical examples of infectious disease.

This book will aid grass-root teachers in most of the branches of epidemiology, from chronic

to communicable diseases. There is a lack of common approach to the writing of each chapter. Therefore the book achieves its goal for some topics and provides a starting point for others, but a few chapters give merely the author's opinion and not a basis from which to teach.

H. E. TILLET

*Public Health Laboratory Service,  
Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre,  
London*

*Viral Infections, Contemporary Issues in Infectious Diseases.* RICHARD K. ROOT & MERLE E. SANDE. Pp. 218 + 20 figs. Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone; 1992. £48.00.

The editors of this volume state, in their introduction, that 'the last decade has witnessed an explosion in our knowledge of the role of viruses in the pathogenesis of human disease'. That this is indeed the case can be gleaned from the increasing proportion of papers in general medical journals devoted to the biology, diagnosis and treatment of viral illness. Among 11 chapters, each written by renowned experts, are those on respiratory viruses, herpes simplex and cytomegalovirus, rotavirus, B19 parvovirus, HIV and hepatitis B. These vary in emphasis, some dealing mainly with basic virology whereas others cover primarily clinical aspects. All are well written and referenced up until late 1991 and, in some cases, early 1992. The chapter on treatment of HIV infection in children is especially informative and includes details of ongoing clinical trials. There is also a lucid summary of acyclovir resistance, in the chapter on herpes simplex virus; however, the U.S. bias throughout the book is illustrated in the comment that there is '...no excuse for lack of availability of acyclovir susceptibility testing in most modern practice settings'. The chapter on chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS), by Jay Levy and others, is more speculative and experimental, but also refreshing in that it shifts the debate over aetiology of CFS from 'a single culprit virus', to more general mechanisms. Prions, now accepted as honorary viruses, despite their apparent unique properties, are discussed by Prusiner. Unfortunately, this chapter, as well as two others, are merely adaptations of previously published review articles in widely read journals. At whom is this volume aimed? As an update in recent progress in virology for clinicians, it has major omissions, such as hepatitis C and E, and human herpesviruses 6 and 7. For the pure virologist, some chapters are weak on basic science. I wonder whether money would not be better spent as a subscription to one of the growing number of review journals in virology, which, in general, are excellent value.

D. PILLAY

*Division of Communicable Diseases,  
Royal Free Hospital School of Medicine,  
London*

*A Colour Atlas of Medical Entomology.* N. R. H. BURGESS & G. O. COWAN. Pp. 144. 300 figs. London: Chapman and Hall; 1992. £55.00.

This new colour atlas encompasses the wide variety of insects detrimental to the health of humans in tropical and temperate regions of the world.

With over 300 photographic illustrations it aims to provide the user with adequate material to identify arthropods of medical importance. It is also suggested the reader will find the descriptive content useful in diagnosis and disease control.

No prior knowledge of entomology is assumed as the classification and anatomy of insects are clarified in the introduction. The following chapters outline the salient features of each relevant insect family, its anatomical description, life cycle, breeding sites and medical significance. Two interesting closing chapters describing methods of arthropod attack and emphasizing measures for personal protection and vector control widen the scope of the book.

The photographs including many of the authors' own are reproduced to a high standard. However, the inclusion of some photographed line drawings and maps which appear dated detract from the over-all quality of presentation. Some of the illustrations lack a reference to scale, making them impractical for the purposes of identification.