endocrine system. Some of the later chapters however are introduced with quite basic physiology, for example that of the development of the reproductive organs, which may be of interest to the student of physiology, but will be revision to the physician.

The book does give, however, a comprehensive and well set out, up-to-date review of endocrine physiology. It is an excellent reference work.

M.G. Prentice
The Middlesex Hospital,
London W1N 8AA.


This new volume in the series Atherosclerosis Reviews, contains papers given at the Vth Joint US - Italy Symposium held in Rome in June 1983 in accordance with the US/Italy agreement for collaboration in the field of health and medicine.

The book is divided into three sections. The first deals with drugs which may induce regression of atherosclerosis, thrombolytic agents, anti-platelet therapy, the prevention of coronary artery spasm and anti-arrhythmic agents. The second section deals with end point results and effects of diuretic treatment of hypertension on plasma lipids from the MRFIT trial and the final results of the Rome project on coronary heart disease prevention which was another multiple risk factor intervention trial. The third section describes new non-invasive techniques which may contribute to the early diagnosis of asymptomatic atherosclerotic disease. These include B-mode ultrasound imaging of arteries and in vitro ultrasonic tissue characterization of atherosclerosis with validation of echo Doppler for the detection of iliac artery stenosis or occlusion.

The contributors include leading Italian and American scientists and physicians and the symposium addressed the problem of finding reliable but earlier biological end points that might reduce the time and the numbers of patients and therefore the huge costs of the present clinical trials. The volume is directed towards both research scientists and practising clinicians. It is a valuable review of the state of the art in the fields covered although it is already two years since the symposium was held.

Celia M. Oakley
Royal Postgraduate Medical School,
London W12 OHS.


Hazards in hospital laboratories occasionally become news, as when workers have died tragically of hepatitis or smallpox, and the recent epidemic of AIDS has focused attention again on possible risks to laboratory workers. Forthcoming legisla-

tion on the control of substances hazardous to health will put a considerable responsibility on hospital administrators, laboratory managers and doctors who have clinical charge of laboratories to ensure that safety hazards are foreseen and that action is taken to reduce them. Dr. Pal's book is therefore timely. It is essentially a reference text, giving comprehensive information on hazards, biological, chemical and physical, that may be present in laboratories, and their prevention. The contributors are all themselves laboratory workers with practical knowledge of the problems they write about, and the book is a most useful summary of present knowledge. It is recommended reading for all laboratory workers and safety officers.

A. Seaton
Institute of Occupational Medicine,
Edinburgh EH8 9SU


The original work Theory and Practice of Public Health was first published in 1961 and Hobson was responsible for taking it through no less than five editions. In an attempt to keep this classic in the public eye, Oxford University Press has invited three distinguished academics to be the revising editors. Although they claim that one of the book's major strengths was its international nature and its links with WHO, one of their first decisions has been to narrow the focus to Britain and North America and cut its links with WHO. By ignoring the essential interrelationship and interdependence of different countries, and the increasing communication and movement between peoples throughout the world this revision suggests that the public health problems of Africa, Asia and South America are not relevant or important to us at all. The editors have decided to concentrate on presenting a comprehensive review of public health as it relates to developed countries.

The third volume is entitled 'Investigative methods in public health' and covers 498 pages. It is a curious mixture of the encyclopedia, the scholarly, the eclectic as well as the zealous, the casual and the incomplete. There are six sections. The first on 'Information systems and routine monitoring' (54 pp.) describes those of the USA and UK. They are unexciting but thorough and the chapter by Alderson contains a useful appendix on the official published sources of health information.

The second section on 'The application of information to health promotion' (34 pp.) contains two essays. That by Lindberg illustrates the problem of overdeveloped technology. He describes an information system, for example, as 'a set of formal arrangements by which facts concerning the health or health care of individuals are stored and processed in computers'. At a stroke that excludes most of us from even studying health issues. Lindberg's section on the evaluation of information systems is disappointing and even cavalier in its approach. Five techniques are mentioned, the market place, operational research, cost effectiveness analysis, cost benefit analysis and technology assessment. It contains such
comments as 'Frequently, automated procedures can be shown to be more cost-effective' without producing any documentary evidence. Other than a mention of Shaw's 'Doctors' dilemma' there is scarcely a single reference to the evaluation literature.

The third and fourth sections on 'Epidemiological technique and planned investigations' (91 pp.) and 'Social science techniques' (73 pp.) are outstanding. In fact, I cannot think of a short text in either of these fields which puts across the material so clearly and concisely.

The fifth section on 'Field investigation of physical, chemical and biological hazards' is frankly disappointing. It suffers considerably, and visibly, from the lack of any central control. This is the field of environmental and occupational health and requires a dedicated editor with an interest in these topics.

The final section, 'Research and development of health promotion services' contains a rag bag of essays on health policy, on priorities and on strategies. Some would have sat better in earlier sections on methodology, others would have been better left out. It was surprising to read the final chapter by Alder on sexually transmitted diseases without a single mention of AIDS, a subject on which he is an international expert. Although the publication date is 1985, it does show the difficulties that multisubject and multiauthor editions have in keeping up to date.

To return to Volume 3 as a whole. O.U.P. in their advertising refer to the Oxford Textbook of Public Health as a major new international textbook of public health for postgraduate students and all those concerned with the formation and execution of public health policy. That, it clearly is not. The book is designed for the cognoscenti, for the privileged few with access to university libraries, for the rich, for the North. Even in the developed world, to which it relates, at £120.00 a set or £35.00 for volume 3, it is beyond the reach of most individuals and will have to rely on the largesse of institutional budgets.

In conclusion, and quoting directly from the revising editors 'It is not an easy task to follow in the footsteps of such a renowned editor as Bill Hobson'. How right they were.

References


S.C. Farrow
Department of Epidemiology and Community Medicine,
University of Wales College of Medicine,
Cardiff CF4 4XN.


This new book is edited by the Director of Obstetric Anaesthesia at the Brigham & Womens Hospital, Boston (9000 deliveries/year). It includes chapters by several Harvard anaesthetists, a New York obstetrician and several by the Editor, the latter being the most readable. The Editor describes it as not a text-book and indeed bench book might be more appropriate in that individual topics can be read up in entirety without references to the rest of the book. This, however, leads to much repetition of lists eg. of precautions, causative agents etc. which the straight through reader would assimilate at first pass.

The book gives an American view on obstetric anaesthetic practice, which concurs with that in the UK in many aspects. Some insight into the differences may be gained from the fact that the anaesthetist is expected to attend the deliveries of all patients who have received regional blocks and in view of the high incidence of instrumental birth with regional analgesia, must lead to a heavy workload.

The layout of the book is good, having clear chapter contents headings. A wide variety of topics are covered including maternal and fetal physiology, perinatal pharmacology, obstetric anaesthesia of all types, anaesthesia for the pregnant (non-obstetric) patient, neonatal problems and management and finally an interesting chapter on medicolegal and mortality matters, comparing the US and the UK.

There is some jargon (eg caregiver, ponderal index). There are inevitable differences in pharmacy, especially narcotics. Ketamine replaces etomidate as second choice of introduction agent after thiopentone. The use of cimeticidine but not ranitidine is mentioned.

Dr. Ostheimer's epidural technique will suit the left-handed anaesthetist, and he gives very safe guidelines on topping up. The obstetric and neonatal chapters are comprehensive and in conjunction with the well-referenced anaesthetic text, the book, a paperback, would be a suitable bench book, in conjunction with English updates on the subject.

P. Bickford-Smith
Anaesthetic Department,
Bradford Royal Infirmary,
Bradford, W. Yorks BD9 6RJ.


Pain is all too common and it is as unpleasant as it is common. Any relevant knowledge is therefore important in the continuing quest for pain relief. Nurses often fail today because they seem to be more interested in the organisation of their profession, tomorrow's possible improvements in science, and less in the patient's simple needs. Maybe it is their basic training which is wrong, but in particular with respect to pain, nurses often fail to identify the detail of a patient's pain or the changes in the pain.

They may record the presence of discomfort, but this omits so much of relevance from the records. Furthermore, they often fail to give reassurance to the patient, thereby omitting a most useful pain killer. I have therefore read this little book, from the patient's point of view, asking the simple question will it improve the standards of nursing care with respect to the management of pain? I think it should be of value to patients because the various roles to be played by the nurse in the reduction or prevention and relief of pain are detailed clearly. Some science, as is necessary in 1985, finds a place. This includes safety and the risks of underventilation after