The Pocket Prescriber and Guide to Prescription Writing. Nineteenth edition. Peter J. Lewis and Michael B. Murphy. Pp. vi + 158. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, London, Melbourne, New York, 1985. £2.95.

The Lord's Prayer can be written on a postage stamp so with small print (and reading glasses) a lot can be included even in a pocket-sized *aide mémoire*. Nevertheless, space is at a premium if cover is to be comprehensive. The disadvantage of smallness is that brevity and conciseness do not provide the detail so often essential for successful treatment. For instance while the loading dose of warfarin at 10 mg daily for three days is reasonable for some, it is too much for others who are sick and elderly. Again, medical treatment for gallstones is feasible but more information is required (such as maximum stone size) and anyway this novel treatment is best initiated by those with specialist experience.

I was curious to know why the book has been resurrected after 17 years and for whom, outside hospital, was it written? Since the last edition in 1969 clinical pharmacology and therapeutics as the basis of medical management have come of age. The many problems of choice, safety, resistance, legal control, blacklists, side effects and interactions have made prescribing more difficult. The increasing knowledge required is a continuing challenge. The inexperienced practitioner will need the BNF, Prescribers Journal, MIMS and the Data Compendium for starters. The experienced general practitioner will eschew pocket digests.

The format adopted is for diseases to be grouped in systems which include the special senses, dermatology and gynaecology, plus a section on poisons. Under each heading, e.g. bronchial asthma, cardiac infarction, peptic ulcer, is the advised medical treatment. There is a helpful chapter on diets and another on terminal care. The style and approach is reminiscent of its august stable mate *Textbook of Medical Treatment*. For those who like to be told what to do in a nutshell, this book is for you. The cost is no more than for a small box of chocolates.

J.G. Lewis
Edgware General Hospital,
Edgware,
Middlesex HA8 0AD.

Recent Advances in Psychogeriatrics No. 1. Edited by Tom Arie. Pp. iii + 235, illustrated. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, London, New York, 1985. £25.

For a rapidly growing but not yet officially recognized specialty such as psychogeriatrics, adoption by the *Recent Advances* series is clearly an important milestone. Following on the heels of a couple of comprehensive tomes on the subject the editor decided to focus on areas in which he saw particular promise or interest and to elicit reviews on their subjects from luminaries he had met on the international circuit. As his chapter on his own department in Nottingham and the educational needs and potential of the specialty showed, there are not many postgraduate students in this field but the increasing band of consultants are still learning

as they go. These, and probably a wider audience, will appreciate the reviews on epidemiology, late age affective disorders, the diagnosis of 'reversible dementia' and the newer forms of brain imaging. It was also useful to read Copeland and Gurland's account of the work of their US/UK study on the elderly. There was also food for thought from Roth on Alzheimer's disease and Jarvik on genetics in dementia. I would rate this as a useful book to read, but not necessarily to own, and look forward to gauging the progress achieved by the time Volume 2 comes out.

Colin Godber,
Psychogeriatric Unit,
Moorgreen Hospital,
Southampton SO3 3JB.

The Social History of Occupational Health. Edited by Paul Weindling for the Society for the Social History of Medicine. Pp. xi + 267, illustrated. Croom Helm, London, Sydney, Dover, New Hampshire, 1985. £17.95.

It has been remarked that occupational diseases are essentially the same as other diseases except that they are socially determined. Thus to a large extent the history of occupational medicine and of occupational health is social history. This book, which might be described as the history of occupational health from a sociological point of view is based on a conference on 'Industrial Medicine' held in 1983.

In the opening chapter it is implied that the history of occupational medicine is a neglected subject, but in fact it is regularly included in postgraduate courses in occupational medicine and journals such as the *British Journal of Industrial Medicine* have contained historical articles over many years. Critical comments on Donald Hunter's *The Diseases of Occupations* are followed by the statement 'The positivistic faith in progress of the medical sciences lacked awareness of how science itself can represent a type of vested social interest which must be subjected to critical scrutiny'. Reference is made elsewhere to the health hazards of 'capitalist industrial production' but they are no different in any other form of industrial production, and sometimes worse. There is a foreword by Michael Meacher, chief opposition spokesman on health and social security which is unfortunately full of sweeping statements of doubtful validity and begs many questions. The most bizarre contribution is one entitled '"Coronary" Heart Disease - a disease of affluence or a disease of industry?'. The question posed by the title is most inadequately addressed, there is no mention of smoking cigarettes and the references are mainly to Registrar General's Reports or those of the Chief Medical Officer of the Ministry of Health, finishing with one to an unpublished monograph!

The most interesting chapters relate to the history of occupational health in Germany and Italy and for this the book is perhaps the most easily available source in English.

R.I. McCallum
Institute of Occupational Medicine,
Roxburgh Place,
Edinburgh EH8 9SU.