

personal regret that the work was funded and published by the Health Promotion Research Trust almost seems in poor taste.

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**The Politics of Health Information: 'Beating Heart Disease' as a Case Study in the Production of Health Education Council Publications**, Wendy Farrant and Jill Russell, Bedford Way Papers 28. Pp. 74. University of London Institute of Education, London, 1986. £3.50.

In this publication Wendy Farrant and Jill Russell make a critical study on the way the Health Education Council's *Beating Heart Disease* booklet was produced. In it they broaden their criticism to much current health education which they believe emanates from medical experts blaming people for their risk behaviour and telling them to change their way of living; or as they put it, the top down approach of the victim blaming. Doctors, they believe, prefer this type of didactic education which keeps them in control. Criticising this approach the authors believe that *Beating Heart Disease* neglects the social factor, the chronic social stress which they consider especially important.

I suspect The Health Education Council considered that the object of the campaign was to inform the individual rather than to press for social change. Their publication *The Health Divide* certainly did not fail to stress the importance of poverty and its relation to health.

It is the responsibility of the doctor to advise his patient to live more healthily but also to press for the social change which makes this possible. This stimulating paper certainly challenges the medical approach to health education and should be read widely. I was left wondering whether the sharp fall in coronary mortality in the United States was really due to a reduction of social stress. I

suspect that changes in diet, cigarette consumption and exercise were more important.

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**Scientific Basis of Dermatology: a Physiological Approach**, edited by A.J. Thody and P.S. Friedmann. Pp. x+375, illustrated. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, London, Melbourne, New York, 1986. £40.

I enjoyed reading this book of 375 pages. There are a number of larger textbooks on biochemistry and physiology of the skin, such as the one edited by Goldsmith in 1983 running to two volumes, but none as succinct and as short as this. I regard the book as being a natural successor to an *Introduction to Biology of the Skin* which was published in 1970 devoted to the Proceedings of the annual Biology of the Skin course held in Cambridge. The current book does not deal with every aspect of skin physiology but there are very useful chapters on protection against ultraviolet radiation and immune functions of the skin. I also felt it particularly helpful to have highlighted the succinct features of diseases such as psoriasis, ichthyoses, disorders of connective tissue, acne, disorders of pigmentation, solar radiation-induced disorders, immunological diseases, and disorders of hair and nails. The book contains a number of clear diagrams and a similar number of black and white illustrations which are of adequate quality. The references appear to be up to date.

In brief, I can recommend this book to trainees in dermatology who are relatively new to the subject but it is perhaps rather too detailed for medical students.

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