

Signs' and other new topics include 'How to Insert an intravenous Cannula (and what to do if you fail)'.

The majority of the book is devoted to a brief description of different diseases and practical guidelines on how to cope with medical conditions and emergencies. Most topics are covered clearly and concisely, with a sensible approach to management.

There are some inevitable errors and omissions and the authors recognize this by including a readers' comment card. Mine will point out that pruritus is spelled pruritis throughout, that tactile vocal fremitus is mentioned more than once but not explained, and that abdominal paracentesis is not mentioned at all.

Scattered through the book are some admirable aphorisms – 'work for your patients, not your consultant', 'have a high index of suspicion and a low reading thermometer (for hypothermia)', 'always assess your patient's inhaler technique. Omitting to do so may be as effective as forgetting to write the prescription'.

I recommend this edition to all final year medical students and house officers. It fits neatly into the pocket of a white coat and has a cover which is easily wiped clean!

J.R. Cove-Smith  
South Cleveland Hospital,  
Middlesborough, Cleveland TS4 3BW.

**Clinical Epidemiology and Biostatistics**, Michael S. Kramer. Pp. xii + 286 Springer-Verlag, Berlin Heidelberg, New York, London, Paris, Tokyo, 1989. DM 76.

Michael Kramer asks in his preface why a further book on Clinical Epidemiology and Biostatistics is needed when there is already a vast number on the market. This is a very readable book with easy to see paper and print but there are a number of problems with it.

In these days of computers it is surprising that no

reference is made to any suitable computers or programmes. Perhaps the author thinks this is best left to the 'expert' but many doctors wish to work on their own statistics and some advice would be useful. The author sets the same sort of problems as many other statisticians have in other books – with the same resulting confusion. It can be confusing for the reader to spend some time on normal distributions and the importance of normalising a distribution when there is no advice on how to demonstrate whether a distribution is normal or at least normal enough to use.

The place of epidemiology in clinical medicine is this book's particular emphasis – not just to inform on possibilities of aetiology, but to judge which is the optimum treatment for an individual. The author seems to imagine that the results of a clinical trial could be used for the management of an individual patient if probability theorem is applied. This is unlikely because of the nature of recruitment for such trials. For instance the MRC Trial on Hypertension chose patients from general practitioners who had an accurate age/sex register. The population studied was not diabetic and had no previous history of myocardial ischaemia, and also tended to be from a higher social class. The results, therefore, need very careful handling if they are to be extrapolated to other patient groups.

Personally I disliked the alternate use of 'he' and 'she'. I know this is to conform to publishers wishes but I found myself 'stumbling' on the text, in order to refer back to see if it was a particular 'he' or 'she' that was being talked about.

Finally the cost of the book seems excessive when there are others available which are cheaper.

A.C. Burden  
Leicester General Hospital,  
Leicester LE5 4PW.

## Books Received

**The Biological Basis of Disease** – Selected papers by P.R.J. Burch. Edited by M.S. Chesters & J.E. Burch. Pp. 280, illustrated. Leeds University Press, Leeds, 1990. £14.95, \$25 paperback.

**Cardiology (Mainstream Medicine)**, R.G. Charles and A.J. Marshall. Pp. ix + 449, illustrated. Heinemann Medical Books, Oxford, 1990. £20.00 paperback.

**Cellular Variation and Adaptation in Cancer. Biological Basis and Therapeutic Consequences**, Michael Woodruff. Pp. ii + 135, illustrated. Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, Tokyo, 1990. £15.00 Hardback.

**Churchill's Illustrated Medical Dictionary**, Pp. 2120, illustrated. Cased. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, London, 1989. £19.95.

**Human Growth After Birth**. Fifth edition, David Sinclair, illustrated. Pp. ix + 259, Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, Tokyo, 1990. Paperback £12.50.

**Illustrated Guide to the Central Nervous System**, K. Sugiura, G.A. Robinson and D.G. Stuart. Pp. 160, illustrated. Ishiyaku EuroAmerica, Inc, St Louis, Tokyo, 1989. £19.25 softbound.

**Management of Minor Head Injuries**, I.J. Swann & S.W. Yates. Pp. x + 102, illustrated. Chapman and Hall Medical, London, 1989. Paperback. £14.95.

**Manual of Medical Therapeutics**. 26th Edition, edited by W.C. Dungan & M.L. Ridner. Pp. xiii + 585, illustrated. Little, Brown & Company, Boston, Massachusetts, 1989. £9.95 Spiral paper bound.

**Medical Record Examination Review**. 5th edition. 800 Multiple Choice Questions with Explanatory Answers. Director S. Pritchard Bailey. Pp. vi + 279. Medical Examination Publishing Company (USA). Distributed by Gazelle Book Services, Lancaster. 1989. £18.25.