library to replace the fourth edition we have? Ah, swift
decisions are not sure (Sophocles this time). I will sleep on
it.

Andrew Bamji
Frogmal Centre for Medical Studies,
Queen Mary's Hospital,
Sidcup,
Kent DA14 6LT.

Myocardial Medley. Medical Anecdotes and Humour,
edited by Ian Gray. Pp ix + 121, illustrated. Radcliffe

This splendid little book kept me consistently amused and
was a source of some reassurance. The numerous anec-
dotes include several which were really too close for
comfort. The description of the terror of being the first at
a cardiac arrest and of the horror of trying to resuscitate
a member of the public in a shopping precinct all reminded
me of similar experiences which I can now recall with the
greatest sense of humour. The book is ideal for cardio-
ologists in that it can be read in an irregularly irregular
fashion – a page here, a small section there – and is
therefore appropriate for last thing before sleep or the
odd 5 minutes over a sandwich.

The average cardiologist on the top of a Bradford
omnibus would find the wisdom, humanity and common
sense of many of the contributions sobering as well as
amusing. I am sure that general physicians and general
practitioners would be equally entertained but I suspect
that it is the cardiologist who will derive the greatest
pleasure.

P. Silverton
Airedale General Hospital,
Steeton, Keighley,
W. Yorks. BD20 6TD.

Occupational Skin Disease. 2nd Edition, edited by R.M.
Adams. Pp xvii + 700, illustrated. W.B. Saunders, Phila-
delphia, 1990, £78.50, hardback.

Those familiar with the splendid 1st (1983) edition of
Occupational Skin Disease will recall that it was almost
entirely the work of Dr Robert M. Adams; other contrib-
utors were involved in only 3 of its 20 chapters. It was
with some trepidation that I read the 2nd edition which
Dr Adams points out is a complete overhaul by 40
contributors and himself, contains 32 chapters and has
expanded to 706 pages. Dr Adams remains the principal
author and happily his wide experience and physician
wisdom have retained their influence on the book as a
whole.

In a multi-author book there is bound to be overlap of
subject matter amongst the chapters and this is dealt with
to some extent by cross references, but it is essential to
refer to the index. For example, the section on cutting oils
(chapter 29) is excellent, but the list of brand name
products and their biocide content is valuable informa-
tion and occurs in the section ‘job descriptions with their
irritants and allergens’. The scope of this book is most
comprehensive and amongst new additions are chapters
on systemic toxicity from percutaneous absorption, con-
nective tissue disorders, the use of computers in the
workplace, cosmetics, and the electronic and semi-con-
ductor industries.

This is a superb book covering all aspects of occupa-
tional skin disease and has a wealth of references and a
distinguished panel of authors. It is an essential reference
book for dermatologists, occupational physicians, toxico-
cologists and all workers concerned with the recognition
and prevention of occupational skin disease.

C.J. Stevenson
Hon. Consultant Dermatologist,
Royal Victoria Infirmary,
Newcastle upon Tyne.

Pharmaceutical Chemicals in Perspective. Bryan G.
Reuben and Harold A. Witcoff. Pp xviii + 518, illus-
trated. John Wiley & Sons, New York, Chichester,
Brisbane, Toronto, Singapore, 1990, £54.64, £82.45,
hardback.

Any book which straddles the worlds of commerce,
public health and molecular pharmacology is unusual.
This book, written by two chemists, attempts such a feat
and in part succeeds.

The first section ‘A Background to Pharmaceuticals’
explores the pharmaceutical industry, patterns of disease
preventing, and the basis of drug action. It offers a
readable introduction to all these areas giving an honest
view of the strengths and weaknesses of both the industry
and patterns of health care delivery.

The second and third sections ‘The Top 100 Drugs’ and
‘Drug Groups outside the Top 100’ are less successful.
They review systematically the most commonly used
drugs within each of the major therapeutic classes.
Considerable information is provided about their chemis-
try and synthesis, much less about their pharmacology,
and an often naïve account of their therapeutic efficacy
and safety. The final chapter offers a futuroistic gaze at the
prospects for the pharmaceutical industry and new drug
discovery.

It is unclear for whom this book has been written.
Undergraduate and postgraduate doctors, pharmacists
and pharmacologists would find it too heavy on chemistry
and too light on biology. Students of organic chemistry,
especially those with an interest in medicinal chemistry,
may find it useful but it is unfortunate that it contained so
little on biotechnology. In the next few years some of the
really novel therapeutic agents are likely to come from
this direction, and the longer term objective must be to
develop simpler organic chemicals which can replace them.

The sooner we breed a younger generation of medicinal
chemists, able to traverse the chasm separating them from
biotechnology, the sooner will long-term become short-
term.

Professor Michael D. Rawlins
Wolfson Unit of Clinical Pharmacology,
Department of Pharmacological Sciences,
The University,
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 7RU.