chapters begins with a brief review of normal physiological function, followed by ways in which mechanisms are disturbed in renal disease, with particular reference to problems in the elderly.

The remaining chapters cover glomerular disease, renal involvement in systemic disease, infections, obstruction, acute and chronic renal failure and hypertension. For each topic the authors have summarized the existing information on adults in general and expanded this to provide information that is specific to the elderly, both from the literature and from their own experience. Where there is a dispute about treatment, they are not afraid to say so, but they give clear details of their current practice and their reasons for following each course of action. Examples include the use of plasma exchange or gamma globulin therapy in thrombotic thrombocytopenic purpura, the use of ACE inhibitors in hypertension and heart failure, erythropoietin for treatment of anaemia, and the place of dialysis and transplantation in elderly patients.

I would recommend this book, not just for physicians in elderly care, but as a source of sound practical advice for nurses and medical staff on nephrology wards and renal units. It also provides excellent revision for M.R.C.P. candidates and nephrologists. It should be included on the shelves of the postgraduate library.

J.R. Cove-Smith
South Cleveland Hospital,
Middlesbrough.

ABC of Nutrition, 2nd Edition, A.S. Truswell. Pp. 106, illustrated. BMJ publication, London, 1992. Paperback £8.95.

Professor Stewart Truswell's second edition of his *ABC of Nutrition* maintains the very high standard of accuracy and readability as his first edition, based on articles on nutrition in a clinical setting in the *British Medical Journal* in 1985 which avoided discouraging biochemistry. It will appeal to a wide section of health professionals interested in nutrition, including medical students, general practitioners, or dieticians who might like to refer to subjects such as 'Reducing the Risk of Coronary Heart Disease' or 'Diet and Hypertension' in the first two chapters. It has a completely new front cover and wearing a stethoscope, has been replaced with a design containing 'healthy' foods such as rice and fish.

Professor Truswell has a gift for making some of the complex facts of nutrition appear simple, and the text is liberally sprinkled with tables figures and insets which contain a surprising amount of information in small compass. For example the question is asked 'Doctor, please take my blood for cholesterol measurement. Then what?' and is answered in a useful practical format. There are 18 chapters including obesity, vitamins, nutrition and for pregnancy for example. The section on food poisoning is helpful for doctors wishing to be updated on this common condition and the chapter on the controversial 'Food Sensitivity' is competently and fairly handled.

I rate this book highly, and it is good value for £8.95. It does not pretend to be an exhaustive treatise but all chapters contain up to 15 references and selected further reading if required for the XYZ of human nutrition.

Ian McLean Baird
Pine Court,
Fairbourne, Cobham,
Surrey KT11 2BT.

Deprivation and Health in Scotland, V. Carstairs and R. Morris. Pp. xiv + 334, illustrated. Aberdeen University Press (Max Perg Mac Group), 1991. Paperback £19.95.

For decades the Registrars General in the United Kingdom have used occupational social class as a social discriminator for morbidity and mortality, but with some statistics available for regions and local government districts. More recently has come the realization that large geographical areas are heterogeneous and that the character of a neighbourhood can change in a conurbation within a few yards. There has been a search for better social discriminators and measures of deprivation. Moneylenders have long recognized the importance of the home address in describing the individual. The introduction of postcodes into the National census, and into mortality and morbidity returns provides the potential for small area statistics, and therefore more homogeneity within and heterogeneity between the units concerned. This book describes the results of analyses within Scotland based on the postcode sector (Edinburgh city has 61) and results from the 1981 census, using a deprivation score obtained by adding unweighted components for overcrowding, male unemployment, lower social class and no car.

The deprivation score shows correlations with many indices of mortality and morbidity, and highlights what happens, for example, in Glasgow city, where affluent middle-class ghettos immediately adjoin impoverished areas.

This exercise is based on one census only. Results from the 1991 census will provide the opportunity to see how rapidly morbidity and mortality reflect changing circumstances within communities.

H. Tunstall-Pedoe
Cardiovascular Epidemiology Unit,
Ninewells Hospital and Medical School,
Dundee.

Pain Mechanisms and Management (British Medical Bulletin, Vol. 47, no. 3), edited by J.C.N. Wells and C. Woolf. Pp. iv + 166, illustrated. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, London, Melbourne, New York, Tokyo, 1992. Hardback £35.00.

The *British Medical Bulletin* has a long and distinguished history of publishing authoritative reviews of currently important clinical topics which present basic experimental scientific data that are relevant to the clinical problem discussed fully in the same issue. This volume carries on this tradition. The last two decades have seen major advances in our understanding of the anatomy, neurophysiology and pharmacology of the central and peripheral mechanisms of pain following the proposal by Melzack and Wall of the 'gate-control' theory of pain, and the identification by Kosterlitz and Hughes of the endogenous peptide ligands for opiate receptors.

In this volume, the underlying mechanisms and clinical management of different types of pain are fully discussed,

including acute and chronic pain, sympathetic pain, neuropathic pain and opioid-responsive and non-responsive pain in cancer. Finally, the role of pain clinics and pain clinic treatments is discussed.

The clinical control of pain is still far from satisfactory. Some treatments, such as intravenous regional sympathetic blocks, and physiotherapy, although used for many years in the management of sympathetic pain, have never been subjected to controlled evaluation, and it is evident that the basic science and therapeutic practice are not advancing in parallel in that clinical area. The editors have permitted some measure of disagreement between their authors. For example, in one chapter the authors claim that there is little evidence to support acupuncture as an effective remedy, while in another the authors believe that there is 'an inherent analgesic action, which may be due to A delta fibre stimulation'. Such conflict and controversy is healthy, however, and the critical reader will enjoy this opportunity of keeping abreast with the cutting edge of basic and clinical research in this very important area of medical practice.

P. Turner

*Department of Clinical Pharmacology,
St Bartholomew's Hospital,
West Smithfield,
London EC1A 7BE.*

Recent Advances in Epilepsy 5, edited by T.A. Pedley and B.S. Meldrum. Pp. 243, illustrated. Churchill Livingstone, London, Tokyo, New York, Madrid, Edinburgh, Melbourne, 1992. Hardback £34.95.

This edition aims to provide an authoritative review on a wide range of topics in the field of epilepsy. There are concise and readable reviews for the specialist in epilepsy rather than for a general physician or a psychiatrist. The most interesting to me was the chapter on behavioural therapy of epilepsy, describing the seizure control by altering the attitude and behaviour of the epileptic patient. A good summary, but in three chapters on the new antiepileptic drugs Vigabatrin, Lamotrigine and Gabapentin. An interesting dimension to this book has been an inclusion of a chapter on management of epilepsy in developing countries as it differs markedly from that in developed countries.

The highlight, in my opinion, of the book is a chapter on management of concurrent medical and psychiatric disorders. A large part of the book is devoted to the fundamental mechanisms, pathophysiology and diagnosis of epilepsy.

Not knowing the price of this hardback volume, it would be an essential book for the library and the specialist (epilepsy clinics). The general physician and the psychiatrists need to browse through.

S.S. Palia

*Postgraduate Centre in Psychiatry,
Penyfar Hospital, Bridgend,
Mid Glamorgan CF31 4LN.*

Annual Review of Public Health, edited by G.S. Omenn. Pp. x + 552. Annual Reviews, Palo Alto, California, 1992. Hardback £27.00.

Health Gain: these two short words permeate and dominate every aspect of the practice of public health medicine in the UK. I therefore approached the annual review of the American practice of the specialty with great interest: are they as wrapped up in the issue? The short answer is 'Yes'; though individual programmes may differ, the essential thrust is the same as on this side of the Pond.

The aim of the volume is given as bridging academic and service based public health and preventive medicine. In addressing this, it is divided into six sections: epidemiology and biostatistics, environmental and occupational health, public health practice, behavioural aspects of health, health services and the public health of ageing.

The aim is clearly met and with success. The book opens with a clear, detailed and weighty review of HIV and AIDS in children and the approach taken sets the tone for the whole book. A central feature of annual reviews is that they must assume each reader will wish to read all topics covered but will not have an in-depth knowledge of every one. As with the rest of the book, this opening section builds up its topic clearly and methodically, starting from the general and moving into more specialist areas.

Of the remainder of the book, I particularly enjoyed three sections. First, the section on the evaluation of health promotion programs discusses the concept of 'black boxes', arguing cogently for opening them. 'Black boxes' embody the notion that purchasers of health and health care programmes do not need to know what goes on in them, merely that the outcomes are successful and at competitive prices. This discussion is an increasingly important feature of negotiations between purchasers and providers in the NHS. I would recommend the book for this chapter alone. I also liked the section on 'public health assessment', a practical vade mecum on the hard indicators that can be used in each major group and how to deal with small areas and small populations. I would strongly recommend this discussion to anyone serious about needs assessment and health gain. Finally, the chapter on 'social marketing' – the concept of bringing the principles of commercial marketing to the management of health changes in society – was fascinating for its directness and businesslike approach, arguing for health professionals to get in there with the media manipulators.

The great value of this book is that it is above all interesting. So many annual reviews are rather dry, telling the reader perhaps more about the authors and their research programmes than the subjects covered. This review picks key areas of mainstream interest to anyone involved in public health; it then sets out the major ideas early in each section and argues them through with increasing complexity such that I suggest any reader will find the discussion valuable.

The editors preface the work by saying that this year's layout and approach is something of an experiment. The experiment was an undoubted success and should be repeated. I strongly recommend anyone working in public health to read it.

Alastair Scotland
*North East Thames RHA,
40 Eastbourne Terrace,
London W2 3QR.*