that single dose activated charcoal reduces absorption to a clinically significant extent following drug overdose, but based on volunteer studies undertaken in circumstances very different from those that obtain in real life or, worse still, based the results of *in vitro* investigations alone. Yet later in the same chapter, in the context of a discussion of the use of multiple dose activated charcoal (MDAC) to enhance drug elimination, the role of MDAC in phenobarbitone poisoning is questioned because 'most clinical studies [demonstrating benefit] have involved a limited number of patients'. And further on, a volunteer study which showed no apparent benefit of MDAC in salicylate overdose is criticized because the study 'did not mimic a true overdose'. Although the existence of different charcoal preparations is mentioned, the (very real) possibility that this might account for instances of pulmonary toxicity and diarrhoea attributed to activated charcoal is not examined. Amongst the various criteria that determine the likelihood of MDAC enhancing elimination of a drug, little attention is given to the importance of pK_a . Finally, despite enthusiastic advocacy of MDAC, the authors offer few *firm* indications for its use.

In contrast, the chapter dealing with the role of haemodialysis and haemoperfusion in the treatment of intoxications gives very clear indications for the deployment of these elimination procedures. There is an excellent examination of the role of sodium bicarbonate in the management of poisoned patients with a good review in particular of the experimental and clinical studies underlying its use in tricyclic antidepressant toxicity. One could argue, in the section on salicylates, that too much emphasis is placed on the need to exclude salicylate ions from the brain (as opposed to those other tissues/organs that contribute metabolically to the vicious downward spiral of metabolic acidosis), but that is a minor quibble.

The remaining chapters on immunotoxicology and specific patient management issues are also generally excellent with, in the main, clear treatment advice. That having been said, the chapter on management of the haemodynamically compromised patient considers the treatment of hypertension associated with monoamine oxidase inhibitor poisoning, but omits the management of the sometimes rather more difficult problem of hypotension in these patients. To my mind also, the chapter on management of smoke inhalation victims downplays the inhibitory effect of carbon monoxide on cytochrome oxidase activity, examines a little superficially the role and mechanisms of action of cyanide antidotes, including

oxygen, and sidesteps some of the more difficult issues surrounding the still controversial use of hyperbaric oxygen in carbon monoxide poisoning. But nonetheless this chapter remains a more useful examination of the topic.

Inevitably in a book of this nature there is some duplication of material, though there are also some apparently contradictory statements. For example, two of the chapters give different reasons to explain why urinary acidification is no longer advocated for phencyclidine overdose. There are also some typographical errors, particularly relating to the very extensive and up-to-date bibliographies, and especially to authors' names including that of this reviewer! Despite this near fatal error, I can recommend this book to clinical toxicologists as well as intensivists, to stimulate thinking and discussion, and as evidence of the increasingly strong science base that underpins a sometimes unrecognized and certainly undervalued branch of medicine, clinical toxicology.

T.J. Meredith
Department of Health,
Hannibal House,
Elephant and Castle,
London SE1 6TE.

Clinical ENT, G.M. O'Donahue, G.J. Bates and A.A. Narula. Pp. x + 223, illustrated. Oxford Medical Publications, Oxford. Paperback: price not given.

This is an excellent, well-presented book with clear diagrams and good colour reproductions. The idea of key points to draw attention to the salient points of ENT helps greatly to reinforce the general text. There are minor ways in which the book could be improved, as one would expect in any new publication.

I will be happy to have it on my bookshelf and in the departmental library.

D. Worgan
Royal South Hants Hospital,
Brintons Terrace, off St Mary's Road,
Southampton SO9 4PE.

Books Received

ABC of AIDS, third edition, edited by M. Wadler. Pp. 86, illustrated. BMA, London, 1993. Paperback, £12.95.

ABC of Monitoring Drug Therapy, J.K. Aronson, M. Hardman and D.J.M. Reynolds. Pp. 37, illustrated. BMA, London, 1993. Paperback, £6.95.

Annual Review of Public Health, Volume 14, edited by G.S. Omenn, J.E. Fielding and L.B. Lave. Pp. 689, illustrated. Annual Reviews, California, 1993. Hardback, \$54.00.