## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>JANUARY 1986</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Editorial</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From Flixborough to Bhopal: is legislation enough?</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P J Baxter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An epidemiological study of petroleum refinery employees</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O Wong, R W Morgan, W J Bailey, R E Swencicki, Kathleen Claxton, and Leeka Kheifets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asbestos content of lung tissue in asbestos associated diseases: a study of 110 cases</td>
<td></td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V L Roggli, P C Pratt, and A R Brody</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative relations between exposure to respirable coalmine dust and coalworkers' simple pneumoconiosis in men who have worked as miners but have left the coal industry</td>
<td></td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C A Soutar, W M Maclaren, R Annis, and A W T Melville</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IgE antibody responses to platinum group metals: a large scale refinery survey</td>
<td></td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R D Murdoch, J Pepys, and E G Hughes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupation and cancer in London: an investigation into nasal and bladder cancer using the Cancer Atlas</td>
<td></td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P J Baxter and M E McDowall</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational mortality from gastric and duodenal ulcer</td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Sonnenberg and G S Sonnenberg</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toluene concentrations in the blood and alveolar air of workers during the workshift and the morning after</td>
<td></td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Brugnone, E De Rosa, L Perbellini, and G B Bartolucci</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gas chromatographic determination of methoxyacetic and ethoxyacetic acid in urine</td>
<td></td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Groesenenken, E Van Vlem, H Veulemans, and R Masschelein</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Short reports</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acute encephalopathy due to occupational exposure to arsenic</td>
<td></td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W S Beckett, J L Moore, J P Keogh, and Margit L Bleecker</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thioethers in urine during occupational exposure to tetrachloroethylene</td>
<td></td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amalia Lafuente and J Mallol</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Correspondence</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neurophysiological studies on workers exposed to lead</td>
<td></td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J Jeyaratnam</td>
<td></td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Book reviews</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No 2 FEBRUARY 1986</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Editorial</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solvents and the brain</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H A Waldron</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and exposure to phenoxyherbicides, chlorophenols, fencing work, and meat works employment: a case-control study</td>
<td></td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N E Pearce, A H Smith, J K Howard, Raewyn A Sheppard, Heather J Giles, and C A Teague</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respiratory cancers and chemical exposures in the wood industry: a nested case-control study</td>
<td></td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T P Kauppinen, T J Partanen, M M Nurminen, J I Nickels, S G Hernberg, T R Hakulinen, E I Pukkala, and E T Savonen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the causal association between exposure to leather dust and nasal cancer: further evidence from a case-control study</td>
<td></td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Merler, A Baldasseroni, R Laria, P Faravelli, R Agostini, R Pisa, and F Berrino</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bladder cancer and occupational exposure to leather</td>
<td></td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L D Marrett, P Hartge, and J W Meigs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic and acute effects of solvents on central nervous system functions in floorlayers</td>
<td></td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerstin Ekberg, L Barregard, S Hagberg, and Gerd Sällsten</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health effects among refrigeration repair workers exposed to fluorocarbons</td>
<td></td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D D Campbell, J E Lockey, J Petajan, B J Gunter, and W N Rom</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinetics of the metal components of intra-tracheally instilled stainless steel welding fume suspensions in rats</td>
<td></td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pirkko-Liisa Kalliomäki, Hanna-Kaisa Hyväriinen, A Aitio, Eeva-Liisa Lakoma, and K Kalliomäki</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determination of safe load</td>
<td></td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S Gracovetsky</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Short reports</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple pigmented papular basal cell carcinomas: a new pattern of industrial tar induced skin tumours</td>
<td></td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L G Millard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Correction: Mortality in the Rhondda Fach 1950–80 (November 1985) ............................................. 136
Herbal tea asthma P D Blanc, W D Trainor, and D T Lim ...................................................................... 137
Correspondence
Hepatotoxicity of organic solvents G Franco, R Fonte, and F Candida .................................................. 139
Information section ............................................................................................................................... 141

No 3  March 1986  ...  PAGE

Editorial
Is asbestos or asbestosis the cause of the increased risk of lung cancer in asbestos workers?
K Browne .............................................................................................................................................. 145
Can exposure to coalmine dust cause a severe impairment of lung function?
J F Hurley and C A Soutar .................................................................................................................. 150
Mortality of asbestos workers in England and Wales 1971–81
J T Hodgson and R D Jones ........................................................................................................... 158
Hazards of lung biopsy in asbestos workers
Y Lerman, J Ribak, and I J Selikoff .................................................................................................. 165
Asbestos fibres in bronchoalveolar lavage fluid from asbestos workers: examination by electron microscopy
A R Gellert, J Y Kitajewska, S Uthayakumar, J B Kirkham, and R M Rudd ........................................ 170
Respiratory ill health among coal miners and telecommunication workers in South Wales
M H Lloyd, S J Gauld, and C A Soutar .............................................................................................. 177
Human ventilatory response to washed and unwashed cottons from different growing areas
E L Peterson, S A Olenchock, R M Castellan, D E Banks, Judith C Mull, J L Hankinson, K C Bragg,
H H Perkins, and J B Cocke ............................................................................................................... 182
Spirometric data and penetration of particles to the alveoli
M Svartengren, E Hassler, K Philipson, and P Camner ..................................................................... 188
Allergy to laboratory animals in laboratory technicians and animal keepers
G Agrup, L Belin, L Sjöstedt, and S Skerfving .................................................................................. 192
Spontaneous abortions among women working in the pharmaceutical industry
H Taskinen, M L Lindbohm, and K Hemminki .............................................................................. 199
Census based mortality study of pharmaceutical industry workers
J M Harrington and P Goldblatt ....................................................................................................... 206
Cancer in the electric power industry
S Törnqvist, S Norell, A Ahlbom, and B Knave ............................................................................... 212
Correspondence
PMR and relative risk
Eric S Johnson ...................................................................................................................................... 214
Book reviews ........................................................................................................................................ 215
Notice .................................................................................................................................................. 216

No 4  April 1986  ...  PAGE

Editorial
Chemical pollution, verbal pollution, and paratoxicology .................................................................... 217
Airway constrictor response to cotton bract extracts in the absence of endotoxin
M G Buck, J H Wall, and E N Schachter ........................................................................................... 220
Cancer incidence among workers in the Norwegian ferroalloy industry
H Kjuus, A Andersen, S Langård, and K E Knudsen ..................................................................... 227
Incidence of cancer among workers producing calcium carbide
H Kjuus, A Andersen, and S Langård ............................................................................................... 237
Investigation of the potential carcinogenicity of a range of chromium containing materials on rat lung
L S Levy, P A Martin, and P L Bidstrup .......................................................................................... 243
Biliary tract cancer and occupation in Sweden
Total population study of factors affecting chronic bronchitis prevalence in the coal mining industry of New South Wales, Australia
J Leigh, A N Wiles, and M Glick ...................................................................................................... 263
Notifications of industrial chemical cyanosis poisoning in the United Kingdom 1961–80
D K Sekimpi and R D Jones ................................................................................................................ 272
Vibration white finger and digital systolic pressure during cooling  
Lena Ekenwall and L E Lindblad  
Assessment of vibration induced white finger: reliability and validity of two tests  
M Hack, M-A Boillat, C Schweizer, and M Lob  
Book review  
Notices  
Correction: Spirometric data and penetration of particles to the alveoli (March 1986)

No 5 MAY 1986
Editorial
Volcanoes and occupational health  
P J Baxter  
Irreversible effects of dichloromethane on the brain after long term exposure: a quantitative study of DNA and the glial cell marker proteins S-100 and GFA  
L E Rosengren, P Kjellstrand, A Aurell, and K G Haglid  
Respiratory disability in ex-flax workers  
J H Elwood, P C Elwood, M J Campbell, C F Stanford, A Chivers, Iris Hey, L Brewster, and P M Sweetnam  
Relation between dust exposure and lung function in miners and ex-miners  
C A Soutar and J F Hurley  
Determination of the distribution of conduction velocities in workers exposed to lead, zinc, and copper  
S Araki, K Yokoyama, K Murata, and H Aono  
Bronchial challenge of normal subjects with the endotoxin of Enterobacter agglomerans isolated from cotton dust  
J P Jamison and R C Lowry  
A survey of cancer and occupation in young and middle aged men. I. Cancers of the respiratory tract  
D Coggon, B Pannett, C Osmond, and E D Acheson  
Effects of 50 Hz electric currents on mood and verbal reasoning skills  
P T Stollery  
Short reports
Gastric cancer in a south Wales valley  
L K Atuahire, M J Campbell, A L Cochrane, M Jones, and F Moore  
Arsine gas poisoning: the importance of exchange transfusions in severe cases  
C S Hesdorffer, F J Milne, J Terblanche, and A M Meyers  
Correspondence
Regression estimate of the adjusted risk ratio  
James Lee  
Book review  
Notice  
Information section

No 6 JUNE 1986
Editorial
Vibration induced injury  
M Färkkilä  
Cancer mortality in the British rubber industry: 1946–80  
T Sorahan, H G Parkes, C A Veyes, and J A H Waterhouse  
Neurobehavioural effects of occupational exposure to lead  
A M Williamson and R K C Teo  
A survey of cancer and occupation in young and middle aged men. II. Non-respiratory cancers  
D Coggon, B Pannett, C Osmond, and E D Acheson  
Erythrocyte arginase, pyrimidine 5'-nucleotidase (P5N), and deoxypyrimidine 5'-nucleotidase (dP5N) as indices of lead exposure  
L R Cook, C R Angle, and S J Stohs  
Correlation between fibre content of the lungs and disease in naval dockyard workers  
J C Wagner, C B Moncrieff, R Coles, D M Griffiths, and D E Munday  
Atopy, non-allergic bronchial reactivity, and past history as determinants of work related symptoms in seasonal grain handlers  
W O C M Cookson, G Ryan, Sharon MacDonald, and A W Musk  
Bronchoalveolar lavage in farmers' lung disease: diagnostic and physiological significance  
Y Cormier, J Bélanger, P Leblanc, and M Laviolette
Pulmonary function in asbestos cement workers: a dose-response study
M Finkelstein ................................................................. 406
Toxicity of dipterex: a field study
Xiaohan Hu, Yaoping Lu, Shouzhen Xue, Youxin Ling, and Xueqi Gu ............... 414
Short reports
An unusual source of lead exposure in a precious metal assay worker
A Margaret Samuel and P J Baxter ........................................ 420
Acute nickel carbonyl poisoning: a report of 179 cases
Shi Zhicheng ....................................................................... 422
A study of serum monoamine oxidase (MAO) activity and the EEG in nickel carbonyl workers
Shi Zhicheng, A Lata, and Han Yuhua ...................................... 425
Duration of exposure as a surrogate for dose in the examination of dose response relations
E S Johnson ......................................................................... 427
Correspondence
Cancer mortality of cadmium workers
G Kazantzis and T H Lam ...................................................... 430
Are hazard warnings sufficient?
M R Braddick ...................................................................... 431
Notices ................................................................................ 432

No 7 JULY 1986

Editorial
Cadmium and the kidney
R R Lauwerys and A M Bernard ............................................... 433
Cohort study of mortality of vermiculite miners exposed to tremolite
J C McDonald, A D McDonald, B Armstrong, and P Sebastien .................. 436
Radiological survey of past and present vermiculite miners exposed to tremolite
J C McDonald, P Sebastien, and B Armstrong .................................. 445
Prevalence of radiographic asbestosis in crocidolite miners and millers at Wittenoom, Western Australia
W O C M Cookson, N H de Klerk, A W Musk, B K Armstrong, J J Glancy, and M S T Hobbs 450
Sickness absence and duration of service in the Post Office 1982-3
S J Searle ............................................................................. 458
Trinitrotoluene: assessment of occupational absorption during manufacture of explosives
B H Woollen, M G Hall, R Craig, and G T Steel ................................ 465
Respiratory diseases in hard metal workers: an occupational hygiene study in a factory
Y Kusaka, K Yokoyama, Y Sera, S Yamamoto, S Sone, H Kyono, T Shirakawa, and S Goto 474
Effect of hard metal dust on ventilatory function
Y Kusaka, Y Ichikawa, T Shirakawa, and S Goto .................................. 486
Joint effect of occupation and nationality on the prevalence of peptic ulcer in German workers
A Sonnenberg and J Haas ........................................................ 490
Cancer mortality among leather tanners
C Edling, H Kling, U Flodin, and O Axelson .................................... 494
Specific causes of death in miners and ex-miners of the Rhondda Fach 1950-80
L K Atuhaire, M J Campbell, A L Cochraine, M Jones, and F Moore ............... 497
Short report
Occupational mycoses
Shi Zhicheng and Lei Pangcheng ............................................... 500
Correspondence
Bright red blood of Bhopal victims: cyanide or MIC?
A G Salmon ........................................................................... 502
Quantitative relations between exposure to respirable coalmine dust and coalworkers’ simple pneumoconiosis in men who have worked as miners but have left the coal industry
W K C Morgan ....................................................................... 503
Book review .......................................................................... 504
Notices ................................................................................ 504

No 8 AUGUST 1986

Editorial
Cement workers and cancer: epidemiology at work?
M McDowall ........................................................................... 505
Mortality of nitrate fertiliser workers
S Al-Dabbagh, D Forman, D Bryson, Irene Stratton, and R Doll
507
Respiratory cancer in Danish bakers: a 10 year cohort study
F Tüchsen and L Nordholm
516
Mortality among masons in Iceland
V Rafnsson and S G Jóhannesdóttir
522
Mortality from stomach cancer in United States cement plant and quarry workers, 1950–80
H E Amandus
526
Comparison of sickness absence in Belgian, German, and Dutch firms
R Prins and A de Graaf
529
Kinetics of styrene in workers from a plastics industry after controlled exposure: a comparison with subjects not previously exposed
A Löf, E Lundgren, and M Byfält Nordqvist
537
Respiratory uptake and elimination of ethylene glycol monoethyl ether after experimental human exposure
D Groeseneken, H Veulemans, and R Masschelein
544
Mortality of slate workers in north Wales
P D Oldham, Carol Bevan, P C Elwood, and N G Hodges
550
Short reports
A threshold for asbestos related lung cancer
K Browne
556
Occupational asthma due to unheated colophony
P S Burge, A Wieland, A S Robertson, and D Weir
559
Fatal methyl bromide poisoning
R H Behrens and D C D Dukes
561
Cancer morbidity in workers exposed to cutting fluids containing nitrates and amines
B Järnvall, B Lavenius, and G Sällsten
563
Investigation by the Ames test of urine samples from rats exposed to methyl isocyanate
Diana Anderson, S D Blowers, and B Nemery
566
Localisation of the chronic osteoarthropathy related to dysbarism
I Rózsahegyi
568
Separation and determination of phenol, 2-naphthol m- and p-, o-cresols and 2,5-xylenol, and catechol in the urine after mixed exposure to phenol, naphthalene, cresols, and xylenols
Grażyna Bieniek and T Wilczok
570
ARFAR: a person years at risk program
S F Barry
572
Information section
574

No 9 SEPTEMBER 1986

Editorial
Sex differences in susceptibility to toxic industrial chemicals
E J Calabrese
577
Respiratory disability in ex-cotton workers
P C Elwood, P M Sweetnam, Carole Bevan, and M J Saunders
580
Symptoms and longitudinal changes in lung function in young seasonal grain handlers
A L James, W O C M Cookson, G Buters, S Lewis, G Ryan, R Hockey, and A W Musk
587
Dissolution of stainless steel welding fumes in the rat lung: an x ray microanalytical study
S Dinuila
592
Occurrence of cancer in women in the meat industry
E S Johnson, H R Fischman, G M Matanoski, and E Diamond
597
Mechanisms of cardiovascular regulation in male rabbits chronically exposed to cadmium
P Boscolo and M Carmignani
605
Evaluation of the chelating action of methicillin in prolonged experimental metallic mercury poisoning
Krystyna Twardowska-Sauch
611
Urinary excretion of ethoxyacetic acid after experimental human exposure to ethylene glycol monoethyl ether
D Groeseneken, H Veulemans, and R Masschelein
615
Assessment of occupational exposure to 4,4'-diaminodiphenylmethane (methylene dianiline) by gas chromatography-mass spectrometry analysis of urine
J Cocker, W Gristwood, and H K Wilson
620
Neuropsychological studies on lead workers in Singapore
J Jeyaratnam, K W Boey, C N Ong, C B Chia, and W O Phoon
626
Outbreak of legionnaires’ disease from a cooling water system in a power station

Mobilisation of heavy metals into the urine by CaEDTA: relation to erythrocyte and plasma concentrations and
exposure indicators
S Araki, H Aono, and K Murata  636

Short reports
Serum angiotensin converting enzyme, ceruloplasmin, and lactic dehydrogenase in anthracosilicosis and
anthracosilicotuberculosis
S Zhicheng, Y Zhiming, A Lata, and H Yuhua  642

A study of lung function in coalworkers’ pneumoconiosis
S Zhicheng  644

Correspondence
Risk factors for radiogenic cancer: a comparison of factors derived from the Hanford survey with those recommended
by the ICRP
K F Baverstock and D G Papworth  646

Book reviews
  647

Notice  648

No 10  OCTOBER 1986

Editorial

The carcinogenicity of chromium and its salts
T Norseth  649

Granulomatous disease associated with pulmonary deposition of titanium
Susan Redline, Barbara P Barna, J F Tomashesfki jr, and J L Abraham  652

Lung function in workers using cadmium containing solders
C Edling, C G Elinder, and Ester Randma  657

Occupational cadmium exposure in jig solderers
N J Smith, M D Topping, J D Stewart, and J G Fletcher  663

Inter-rater agreement in assessing occupational exposure in a case-control study
M S Goldberg, J Stiemiatycky, and M Gerin  667

Mortality of middle aged white South African gold miners
C H Wyndham, B N Beuzudenhou, M J Greenacre, and G K Sluis-Cremer  677

An update of mortality among chemical workers exposed to benzene
G G Bond, E A McLaren, C L Baldwin, and R R Cook  685

Quantitative relation of urinary phenol levels to breathzone benzene concentrations: a factory survey

Health status of school age children employed in carpet weaving in Ganderbal Block
G M Mattao, A Rauf, and M L Zutshi  698

Is vibration white finger a primary sympathetic nerve injury?
Lena Ekennval and L E Lindblad  702

Mortality and lead exposure: a retrospective cohort study of Swedish smelter workers
L Gerhardsson, N-G Lundström, F Nordberg, and S Wall  707

Short reports
Effect of immersion on urinary lead excretion
Audrey Heywood, H A Waldron, P O’Hare, and P A Dieppe  713

Biliary tract cancer in the chemical industry: a proportional mortality study
P W Brandt-Rauf and J A Hathaway  716

Urinary theiothreitol output as an index of occupational chemical exposure in petroleum retailers
J K Stock and B G Priestly  718

No 11  NOVEMBER 1986

Editorial

Leptospirosis as an occupational disease
Sheena A Waitkins  721

Follow up study of workers manufacturing chrysotile asbestos cement products
M J Gardner, P D Winter, B Pannett, and C A Powell  726

Health, fitness, physical activity, and morbidity of middle aged male factory workers. I
W Tuxworth, A M Nevill, C White, and C Jenkins  733
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relation between pathological grading and lung fibre concentration in a patient with asbestosis</td>
<td>B Gylseth and V Skaug</td>
<td>754</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physiologicomathematical model for studying human exposure to organic solvents: kinetics of blood/tissue n-hexane concentrations and of 2,5-hexanedione in urine</td>
<td>L Perbellini, P Mozzo, F Brugnone, and A Zedde</td>
<td>760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formaldehyde and the risk of squamous cell carcinoma of the sinonasal cavities</td>
<td>J H Olsen and S Asnaes</td>
<td>769</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hand wrist cumulative trauma disorders in industry</td>
<td>Barbara A Silverstein, L J Fine, and T J Armstrong</td>
<td>779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acrylamide cohort mortality study</td>
<td>W Sobel, G G Bond, T W Parsons, and F E Brenner</td>
<td>785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book reviews</td>
<td></td>
<td>789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notice</td>
<td></td>
<td>789</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information section</td>
<td></td>
<td>790</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dust exposure, dust recovered from the lung, and associated pathology in a group of British coalminers</td>
<td>A N Douglas, A Robertson, J S Chapman, and V A Ruckley</td>
<td>793</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respiratory effects of occupational exposure to tobacco dust</td>
<td>G Viegi, P L Paggiaro, E Begliomini, E Vaghetti, P Paoletti, and C Giuntini</td>
<td>795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ventilatory impairment from pre-harvest retted flax</td>
<td>J P Jamison, J H M Langlands, and R C Lowry</td>
<td>802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alveolar sampling and fast kinetics of tetrachloroethene in man. I Alveolar sampling</td>
<td>J J G Opdam and J F J Smolders</td>
<td>814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temperature and vibration thresholds in vibration syndrome</td>
<td>Lena Ekenvall, B Y Nilsson, and P Gustavsson</td>
<td>825</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phenotypic characterisation of peripheral blood lymphoid cells in people exposed to fibrous zeolite</td>
<td>M Özesmi, A Karlsson-Parra, G Hillerdal, and U Forsum</td>
<td>830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaseous and adsorbed PAH in an iron foundry</td>
<td>U Knecht, H-J Elliehausen, and H-J Woitowitz</td>
<td>834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A simplified method for determining erythrocyte pyrimidine 5'-nucleotidase (P5N) activity by HPLC and its value in monitoring lead exposure</td>
<td>T Sakai and K Ushio</td>
<td>839</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correspondence</td>
<td></td>
<td>845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respiratory disability in ex-flax workers</td>
<td>J E Cotes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vibration induced injury</td>
<td>P V Pelnar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book reviews</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Notices</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Index to volume</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>
tionary. Both SI units and their equivalents must be given throughout. Authors should note that clarity and brevity are virtues that are given great weight when considering a paper for publication. The Editor cannot enter into correspondence about papers that are rejected as being unsuitable for publication and his decision is final. Rejected manuscripts will not be returned to authors, instead they will be kept securely for three months and then shredded. Authors are advised, therefore, not to submit original illustrations with their manuscripts but rather good quality reproductions. The original illustrations should be forwarded to the Editor on acceptance of the manuscript.

Papers are accepted on the understanding that the work described has not appeared in whole elsewhere and that they are subject to editorial revision. Where the findings have been published elsewhere in part this must be clearly stated and the submitted manuscript should be accompanied by a copy of the publication that contains those findings. If part of the findings are contained in a manuscript that is under consideration elsewhere a copy of that manuscript should be included with that submitted to the journal. A letter given consent to publication must be signed by all those whose name appears on the manuscript. Papers that describe studies carried out on human subjects must give evidence that the protocol was approved by an ethical committee and that all the subjects gave their informed consent.

There is no prescribed length for original papers but authors should not submit papers which exceed 10,000 words (about 30 typewritten sheets) without first consulting the Editor.

Original papers should follow the requirements of the International Steering Committee of Medical Editors; details, with which authors should familiarise themselves, are to be found in the British Medical Journal (1979;i:532–5). Papers should be prefaced by an abstract of the argument and findings and should be more comprehensive than a summary. The abstract must not contain references. Short reports or case reports do not require an abstract.

On acceptance of a manuscript, authors must send original copies of all illustrations to the Editor as quickly as possible. Photographs on glossy paper should be submitted unmounted. An internal scale should be provided on photomicrographs and details of any staining procedure included in the legend. Colour photographs will not be published unless the authors underwrite the cost of production. Charts and graphs should be carefully drawn in black ink on tracing linen, Bristol board, or stout white paper. Legends to figures should be typed on a separate sheet of paper.

Tables should be kept to a minimum and should not contain material that is fully described in the text. They should be typed on separate sheets of paper. Long appendices should be avoided. When the author considers it essential to include large numbers of tables or long appendices it may be possible to print them at the end of the text in miniprint. The Editor should be consulted in advance.

Signed editorials will normally be specially commissioned, and authors who are considering the submission of an editorial should do so only after consultation with the Editor. Letters to the Editor, which should not exceed 500 words, may deal with any topic and will be published as soon as space permits. When letters refer to papers that have appeared in the Journal, the authors of the original paper will be given the opportunity to reply. Unsolicited book reviews will not be published.

References The number of references in the text of papers submitted should be kept to a minimum. They are required only if they are essential to the development of a hypothesis which the authors are proposing to test, if they are necessary for the development of an argument or discussion, or if they describe methods that are being used when the original account is too lengthy to be included in full. Exhaustive lists of references are frequently included in a paper more to impress than to instruct and should be avoided whenever possible; over-frequent reference to the authors’ own papers is an indulgence best avoided.

All references in material submitted to the journal must conform with the so-called Vancouver style which is intended to standardise requirements for authors. The style is described in detail in the British Medical Journal (1979;i:532–5) and authors are urged to study it carefully. Manuscripts in which the references do not follow the prescribed style will be returned to be amended before they are considered for publication. Reference lists should be typed in double spacing. The essentials of the style are as follows.

References should be numbered consecutively in the order in which they are first mentioned in the text by Arabic numerals above the line on each occasion the reference is cited. References cited only in tables or in legends to figures should be numbered in accordance with a sequence established by the first identification in the text of a particular table or illustration. The references must include: the names and initials of all authors (unless there are more than six, when only the first three should be given followed by et al); the title of journal articles or book chapters; the titles of journals abbreviated according to the style of the Index Medicus; the year and volume number; and the first and final page numbers of the article or chap-
 Titles of books should be followed by place of publication, publisher, and year. Papers given at meetings cannot be cited as a reference unless the proceedings have been published. If they have not been published they must be referred to in the text.

Examples of common forms of references are:


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From 1 July 1985 articles submitted for publication will not be returned. Authors whose papers are rejected will be advised of the decision and the manuscripts will be kept under security for three months to deal with any inquiries and then destroyed.