Book reviews

Colour vision testing. By Janet Voke. (Pp 45; £9.50.) Keeler Davis; London. 1980.

The appearance of this monograph will be specially welcomed by those who have waited since 1946 for an up-dating of the excellent report by the Colour Group of the Physical Society on roughly the same subject. Dr Voke has in addition been bold enough to suggest an evaluation of the demand for colour vision in a large number of trades in a great many large industries, and this should be picked up by a number of doctors in industrial medicine. She gives reasonably clear differentiation between the trades where defective colour vision is a disadvantage to productivity and those where the defect is a positive safety hazard. Not previously produced in such detail is a formidable list of acquired colour vision defects arising from toxic substances and systemic diseases, including aging and proposals for three-yearly testing—but not giving clear guidance on the best tests—which may make industrial doctors and management wince at the work load and wonder about all the other important diseases that also need to be detected.

She mentions the interesting fact of colour defectives having a peculiar ability to “see through” camouflage, and they have of course been usefully employed in photographic interpretation units of the armed Forces in the second world war. Physiology and colour vision theories leave many practical people cold, and although technically competent, this section will inevitably be passed over by many readers.

The review of careers/jobs/occupations is extremely thorough and of great interest to those directly concerned, but it is impossible not to recognise a heavy bias towards using the City University Test extensively as a control and to plug the use of this test which many, especially in the transport industry, would challenge. A possible omission of interest is the commercial importance of colour matching in

the Sherry industry.

Few will disagree with the plea to use the term “colour defective,” and it is rather a shame that Dr Voke falls into her own trap when she is carried away by emphasis in referring to “a colour-blind nurse or anaesthetist” (p 9).

What a pity it is that there are so many printing and spelling errors in a publication of otherwise excellent quality and technical skill.

C T NEWNHAM

Occupational Asthma. Editor, Claude Albee Frazier. (£16.90.) Van Nostrand Reinhold Company Ltd; Wokingham, UK. 1980.

This book barely mentions several well-recognised causes of asthma, such as platinum salts and di-isocyanates. It contains no chapters on investigative methods, prevention, or treatment. These omissions make the inclusion of irrelevant sections—for example, those on pneumoconiosis and exercise-induced asthma—even more surprising. Other limitations include a poor index, two chapters without references, and 10 of the remaining 18 with no references dated after 1976. Despite these faults, there is interesting material in the book, but the editor has failed in his intention “to assist the practising physician in the diagnosis and treatment of occupational asthma.”

KATHERINE M VENABLES

Developments in Occupational Medicine. Editor C Zenz. (Pp 477; £37.50.) Year Book Publishers; Chicago. 1980.

This important book sets out some of the most important recent developments in occupational medicine and highlights those areas of growing concern to which increasing attention will be paid in the future. There is a good account of occupational epidemiology by Hernberg, emphasising the problems which confront the epidemiologist in industry and giving

sound guidelines on the interpretation of data derived from studies undertaken on men at work.

The section on the health problems of women at work is comprehensive, although it does not contain much that has not appeared elsewhere in recent months. Nevertheless, it is a useful gathering together of information which will provide a launching pad for others who wish to make a special study of this area.

There are two short sections in the book, on the physical working environment and on psychosocial considerations, which are less substantial, both in form and content than the remainder. The other large section is devoted to the chemical working environment, concentrating on solvents and pesticides, and concluding with a chapter by Zenz himself in which he discusses a wide variety of commonly encountered substances.

Although the book is expensive it will undoubtedly reach a wide audience and should help to direct the thoughts of occupational physicians along the new paths which the subject is travelling.

H A WALDRON

Notice

An International Conference on Heavy Metals in the Environment will take place in Amsterdam in September 1981. The themes of this conference will include: health effects, metal speciation, interaction of metals, pathways and cycling, industrial waste management, material balances, sludge treatment/disposal, and analytical techniques.

Information on the meeting is available from the Secretariat, CEP Consultants Ltd, 26 Albany Street, Edinburgh EH1 3QH.