Book reviews

Absenteeism in Industry. By Stanley F. Yolles, Pasquale A. Carone, and Leonard W. Krinsky. (Pp. 141; \$11.50). Springfield, Illinois: Thomas. 1975.

The title page of this book gives no indication that it is actually a full transcript of a two-day conference on absenteeism held in 1973. The conference was sponsored jointly by the South Oaks Federation and the Department of Psychiatry of the State University of New York with 58 participants drawn from a wide range of backgrounds. Each of its seven chapters begins with an introductory paper followed by a lengthy and largely unstructured discussion which rarely keeps to that aspect of absenteeism considered in the paper. The main contributions consider the subject from differing viewpoints: industrial psychology, line and personnel management, trades union, general practice, and psychiatry. The final session was opened by Dr Steinfeld who had recently been Surgeon General of the United States: his paper was the only one to contain any facts and figures and these were derived from the National Health Survey in 1971.

The subject of absenteeism can often generate dogmatic assertions among those who take part in such meetings, and this symposium was no exception. Some of the conflicts clearly arose because participants were not agreed on just what was meant by the word absenteeism. Some clearly considered that the meeting was concerned with wilful absence from work (malingering), others with absence caused by or attributed to illness and injury, or by the abuse of alcohol and other drugs. Most however seemed to agree that attendance at work was largely determined by motivation even if they differed on ways to improve it. Two themes run through the book, the recent but fundamental changes that have occurred in attitudes of workers towards their jobs and the important role of alcohol and drug abuse in the causation of frequent absences from work. Although this book contains much that will interest managers and doctors in industry, it contains nothing really new. It has neither references nor a bibliography and little factual information is provided to support the opinions put forward by the participants. While I found some of the main papers in this book both clear and interesting, most of the discussion sections which fill more than half the pages were tedious, repetitive, and added little of substance.

P. J. TAYLOR

Cadmium in the Environment, 2nd edition. By L. Friberg, M. Piscator, G. F. Nordberg, and T. Kjellström. (Pp. 260; \$29.95). CRC Press. 1974.

The authors of this book are all members of the Department of Environmental Hygiene at the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm and their names have been appearing in the literature on cadmium for many years.

This is not a textbook in the normal meaning but consists of a summary of all papers written on cadmium with appropriate comments and criticism. The chapters are well selected and include cadmium occurrence, possible route of exposure and daily intake, cadmium metabolism, respiratory effects, and dose-response relationships—problems which are of great interest to the specialist in occupational health. Interspersed with the summaries are sections on problems of analysis which are extremely practical and give reasons for using various methods under different circumstances. There are important discussions on the value of cadmium estimations in blood and the relevance of cadmium in urine estimations. This is a complete and detailed survey of all relevant literature in the cadmium story but one chapter is devoted to a study of the health effects of cadmium in the general environment in Japan. This is mainly a study of *htai-htai* disease which has never been completely documented and the authors have collected all the Japanese studies and discussed and criticized their findings. The conclusions they draw are particularly interesting in the light of the high rate of calcium excretion which is found in cadmium workers and the osteomalacia found in Japan contrasts rather strangely with the rarity of bone effects seen in people exposed to cadmium in this country. The influence of diet and vitamin D on the *htai-htai* syndrome demonstrates the need for the use of very precise epidemiological evidence in investigations of the effects of pollution by heavy metals.

This book is essential reading for anyone interested in heavy metals and gives an immense amount of practical information to the epidemiologist interested in the effects of pollution.

H. HOLDEN

The Human Operator in Process Control. Edited by Elwyn Edwards and Frank P. Lees. (Pp. 480; £11.00). London: Taylor and Francis. 1974.

This book is written jointly by an ergonomist and a chemical engineer, both of whom held an Industrial Research Fellowship in order to work through the literature which has been written on the process operator. A good deal of this was packed away in odd corners and was not well known, particularly by engineers. The result of their efforts is the compilation of 26 reproduced papers, which range widely over the field of process control ergonomics, starting with a paper on automation and skill (which might, perhaps, be thought to be mutually exclusive). Visual alertness and the sampling of displayed information then receives attention, along with the manual control of slow response systems. These first three papers come from the Institute of Experimental Psychology in Oxford, and display a blend of laboratory and field approach. Two papers from Bristol follow, one upon the processing of crude oil, and the other upon the control of a continuous baking oven, in which the skill of the oven man is analysed. These two papers use an investigatory approach, which was developed in Cambridge during the second world war so successfully by Sir Frederick Bartlett FRS, and his team, many of whom now hold senior positions in psychology in the English speaking world. Imperial Chemical Industries present a paper upon the mental loading of process operators, and Bowaters, one on the interaction between human and automatic control and computer control and the dialogue between plant operators and their instruments. The Loughborough University of Technology contributes a paper upon the quite important subject of 'instrument malfunction' or 'when to disbelieve your instruments'. This is a not uncommon problem in aircraft and sometimes in power stations, to say nothing of private cars. The publication is completed by a chapter, again from Loughborough, which summarizes the research which has been done on the process operator, who can perhaps, be looked upon as the vestigial human remain in a plant which is nearly but not quite fully automatic.

Occupational health doctors who work in industries which have large semi-automatic plants will find this book interesting, but the human operator in process control tends to be thought of as a link in a communication chain rather than as a social animal with red blood in him.

R. C. BROWNE

Joint ILO/WHO Conference on the Teaching of Occupational Health and Safety, Milan 26-30 June 1972. (Pp. 50; not for sale). Regional Office for Europe, World Health Organization, Copenhagen. 1974.

The conference examined the basic requirements of occupational health and safety services, particularly their manpower needs, as a preliminary to discussing the planning and organization of training programmes in occupational health and safety.

Countries represented were Finland, Turkey, Sweden, United Kingdom, France, Bulgaria, United States of America, Belgium, Poland, USSR, Germany, Italy, Yugoslavia, Netherlands, and Switzerland; there were no representatives of the African countries, Asia, or the Antipodes. Occupational medicine was the most widely represented discipline, but occupational health nursing,

government departments, and university departments of safety, hygiene, and industrial studies also had representatives.

Emphasis was placed on health and job satisfaction, ergonomics, human factors in accidents, and an appreciation that classical occupational diseases are now of less importance than formerly.

The conference agreed that the worker will demand not only safety and health at work, but less fatigue, improved comfort and job satisfaction, and recognized, therefore, the need to study the physical, physiological, psychological, and social aspects of work.

There will be a demand for more occupational health services and new methods will need to be developed to study deviations from normal health at an early stage.

It was also concluded that more elderly and handicapped people with limited capacities will demand the right to work.

The main text of the book is concerned with the objectives of education in occupational health and the type of training required for undergraduate medical students, occupational health physicians, occupational health nurses, occupational hygienists, and safety engineers. Consideration is then given to the training in occupational health and safety of industrial workers, managers, machine designers, and production engineers.

A chapter is concerned with organizing and developing curricula and another describes the need to evaluate educational programmes. Finally categories and levels of training are discussed with reference to the countries represented.

In discussing manpower planning a number of factors which need to be considered are described but no firm standards are laid down. Reference is made to experience gained in the countries represented. The need for facts in this area is of paramount importance, but inevitably this will depend on the state of industrialization in the countries concerned, the other health and social services provided, the sophistication of engineering control and occupational hygiene monitoring, in addition to the resources in manpower and money available. Nevertheless this book gives most helpful guidance on the important factors to consider in planning preventive health services for the worker, the experts and training required.

I recommend this book to all who are concerned with the teaching of occupational health and safety and for the consideration of those who are planning occupational health services at a national or local level.

S. GAUVAIN

Type A Behavior and Your Heart. By Meyer Friedman and Ray H. Rosenmann. (Pp. 276; £2.75, paperback) London: Wildwood House. 1975.

For those who do not know what Type A behaviour is, it can best be described as the result of a competitive drive, whereby the victim struggles constantly against time to achieve a goal or a number of goals which he has set himself, usually at the expense of others to whom he shows impatience, intolerance and even hostility, the American go-getter in action. In a number of articles in medical journals, beginning with the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (1959, 169, 1286-1296) the