Book reviews

Contact Dermatitis. By Etain Cronin. (Pp 928; £28.00.) Edinburgh; Churchill Livingstone. 1980.

This magnificent work will undoubtedly become a standard volume for all those who have an interest in patch testing and contact dermatitis. Dr Cronin mentions in the preface that she has not been able to include all references, but nevertheless there are a vast number, and these should prove most useful to all interested in this sphere. The work of the contact clinics of St John's Hospital for Diseases of the Skin, London, has been presented in detail.

Inevitably the details of industrial technology are somewhat meagre in places, but to have extended these would have rendered the book unwieldy, and there are sufficient references for the interested observer to pursue these points further. There is a useful final chapter on "Irritants and sensitisers in various occupations," etc.

There are a large number of line illustrations but no colour plates, and a few illustrating the mode of application of tests and the scoring scale would be invaluable.

It is difficult in a volume of this nature to decide the best location for some items, but perhaps "The histology of patch test reactions" (p 29) in the general chapter 2 could better be sited in chapter 1—"Technique of patch testing."

Such suggestions, however, seem somewhat unduly critical in a book of such high quality—it is delightfully written, with a wealth of factual data and interesting case histories. There is a constant stimulus to cross referencing.

This volume is extremely good value even at £28.00. It will become a standard reference book in all medical libraries and should be purchased by all dermatologists, occupational physicians, cosmetic scientists, and be immediately to hand in all departments of dermatology.

M A COOKE

Recent Advances in Occupational Health. Edited by J C McDonald. (Price £16.00.) Churchill Livingstone; London. 1981.

Four major areas of concern in occupational health—work hazards, investigative methods, worker protection, and social aspects—are examined. In the first section on worker hazards the topics are: the mineral fibre problem, carcinogenic effects of metals, microwave radiation, acute reactions to inhaled agents, energy production, deep-sea diving, the health industry, and agriculture in the Third World. The second section on investigative methods contains chapters on survey design and analysis, linkage methods in occupational mortality, personal-environmental interactions in occupational epidemiology, radiographic classifications, behavioural tests in human toxicology, and short-term tests and cancer policy. Under the third heading of worker protection are chapters about accident prevention, the helmet respirator, strategies of biological monitoring, strategies of air sampling, and workplace monitoring devices. The last section on social aspects contains chapters on the quality of working life—a Scandinavian view, employment of the severely disabled, exposure limits—whose responsibility?, exposure limits—the scientific criteria, and cost-benefit analysis.

The editor has assembled a series of useful and up-to-date articles. As in any book of this type the reader will probably find some chapters more interesting, relevant, and informative than others. So far as I was able to judge, however, the quality of the information purveyed was high, and the task of reading was, for the most part, pleasurable. The index seemed comprehensive and worked well on the random selections tested.

This book should appeal to established and tyro occupational physicians, to occupational hygienists, and in the social aspects section to a wider field of health professionals and to managers. It should

find a place on the shelves of any library dealing with problems of occupational health and will be a valuable source of stimulation and reference on personal bookshelves.

A couple of minor niggles of an editorial type: the word data is treated both as singular and as plural on p 82—it is, of course, a plural word contrary to much contemporary usage; and it is a pity to have both American and English styles in the same book—vide estrogen analog on p 153. The book is clearly printed, has semi-stiff covers, and in these days of high costs appears to be reasonable value at £16.00. Professor Corbett McDonald and his team are to be congratulated on the standards of information, clarity, and interest achieved in this multi-author book. Recommended reading, I think, for most people who read this review.

A WARD GARDNER

Lead in man and the environment. By J M Ratcliffe. (£23.50.) John Wiley & Sons Ltd; Chichester. 1981.

It is extraordinary how lead as an element has attracted the attention of so many people in the scientific field, in relation to its real or potential effect, or both, on man and his well-being, relative to environmental exposure. Here we have another volume devoted to the same theme giving a description of the effects of the element on mankind from different sources and at different levels of exposure, brought up-to-date by an extensive review of the recent publications especially aligned towards children, but not without reference to occupational exposure.

Perhaps the author might be considered in error on page 13 of her introduction, where she states that the amount of lead in our surroundings has increased over the past decade, when the evidence for the lead content in food and in the blood of populations from different countries suggests the opposite.

The first part of the book deals with the