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

effects on health of lead and biological guidelines. There is much of interest here, but to those not altogether familiar with the subject an impression of some confusion may be given, particularly as regards acceptable indices and effects at different levels of exposure, especially in the chapter on neurotoxicity. Although not an easy task, a greater clarification of some of the issues would have been welcome.

In the second part of the book on the sources of lead in man and their control much attention is devoted to atmospheric sources and their contribution to the body burden by inhalation and secondary ingestion from fall-out. By comparison other sources receive rather scant attention, which, enhanced by a certain amount of repetition, gives rise to a somewhat unbalanced portrayal of the overall picture. Since the author seems to consider that in general the atmosphere is not a major contributory factor a more balanced assessment would have been appropriate.

Obviously much work and research has gone into compiling this volume, for which the author is to be congratulated. It is a worthy addition to the mounting literature on the subject and merits a place on the library shelf, despite some indigestible qualities and an element of imbalance.

P S I BARRY

Woods injurious to human health: A manual. By Björn M Hausen. (Pp 189; DM 69.) Walter de Gruyter; Berlin, New York. 1981.

That wood and other plant materials are a source on occasion of potent irritants and sometimes strongly sensitising substances

should come as no surprise when you reflect on the effects of, for example, poison ivy, the primulaceae, or even nettles. The relative absence of problems associated with the widespread use of wood could give rise to a false sense of security. Dr Hausen has in a remarkably compact manual summarised the various ways in which those who work with, play with, live with, or decorate themselves with wood can be affected by the various varieties. He has also compressed effectively notes on the mechanisms so far as they are understood by which the effects occur with brief notes on experimental methods, including the extraction and preparation of antigens and a section on the chemistry and immunochemistry of these substances. To the specialist these parts may be superfluous but the bibliographies attached to each successive section make the manual an excellent research source.

The manual's main value lies in its comprehensive list of woods (78 in all) and includes a description of their appearance, source, uses, notes on the known health hazards—for example, dermatitis, asthma, allergic alveolitis, etc—supported by the appropriate references together with notes on the chemical constituents isolated and considered to be the prime allergen or irritant. Dr Thomson's translation flows smoothly and the manual is a pleasure to read. The diagrams and other illustrations are excellent. It will prove an excellent addition to the library of the occupational physician, particularly those advising the timber and furniture trades and many more specialist colleagues. In addition it should find its way into any reasonably sized medical library and is a "good read" for the physician with a general interest in

some, perhaps not so unusual, causes of skin trouble or respiratory illness.

H F V RIDDLE

Notices

Xth Annual International Congress of MEDICHEM. Paris, 14-16 September, 1982.

The Xth annual congress of MEDICHEM will take place in Paris from 14 to 16 September 1982. The general programme chairmen will be Professor AM Thiess and Professor PE Fournier. Topics for discussion will include: occupational diseases in chemical industry, medical legal responsibilities in chemical industry, methods in epidemiology of noxious effects of chemicals on man, evaluation of maximum allowable concentrations of chemicals, and toxicological problems in the chemical industry.

Information on the meeting is available from Professor ML Efthymiou, Hospital F Widai, 200, rue du Faubourg-Saint-Denis, 75475 Paris Cedex 10-France.

The 10th Asian Conference on Occupational Health will take place in Singapore from 5 to 10 September 1982. Contributions will include those pertaining to occupational medicine, occupational health nursing, safety, toxicology, ergonomics, occupational physiology, occupational psychiatry, and related subjects. Scientific papers on any subject relating to the health of workers of industrial environment will be welcome.

Information on the meeting is available from the Secretariat, 10th Asian Conference on Occupational Health, Kreta Ayer PO Box 241, Singapore 9109, Republic of Singapore.