Occupational Health 3rd ed. Edited by Barry Levy, David H Wegman. (Pp 650, price £33). 1994. London: Churchill Livingstone (Little Brown). ISBN 0316522716.

Good quality textbooks of occupational health used to be few and far between. The potential reader (or buyer) had little choice and what was available was not necessarily very good. Much has changed in the past decade or so. Now, the choice is not only broader but can be divided up by size. There are several good primers—two that are based in the United Kingdom and one American. At the other end of the scale, the best textbooks are the British Hunter (8th ed.) and the new American text from Rosenstock and Cullen. Purchasing “big” books is not necessarily something we can all afford but although a primer will start you off, most practitioners will also need a medium sized volume to take them through the years from an associate to a member of the Faculty of Occupational Medicine. Here the choice, in my view, was between Occupational Health Practice (3rd ed. 1989) and Levy and Wegman’s text (2nd ed. 1988). The arrival of a third edition of Levy and Wegman late in 1994 shifts the balance decidedly in favour of our American cousins’ contribution.

I liked the style and format of the two earlier editions but like many American based books, its bias in scope was always to the American scene with only a passing reference to the world outside. This latest text is much more international and the scope of its chapters has widened too.

In essence it is partly written and wholly edited by Barry Levy and David Wegman. Various chapters are written by others but they are, almost without exception, international authorities on their subject. The editors have maintained the same broad format of previous editions but some chapters, such as the one on the social context of work, now much more accurately reflect the changing work patterns and the shift from industrial to service industry in many developed countries. The chapter on regulation now contains a section on the European Community. Some important new chapters have been added; such as shift work and

problems related to buildings, others on infectious diseases pay more attention to developing countries as well as the increasing importance of tuberculosis and AIDS. Likewise, the chapters on agriculture and construction reflect the importance of these industries in the global context.

This really is a very good text. It is admittedly American and still weighted towards the United States scene but its British competitor is now seriously out of date. If you are looking for a medium sized book to cover most of your needs, you need look no further.

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Occupational Health and National Development Edited by J JEYARATNAM, KS CHIA (Pp 476; price £64, paperback £34). 1994. Singapore: World Scientific. ISBN 981-02-1464-2

This book publishes papers given by international experts at a seminar in Singapore. It was organised by the National University at the behest of the International Commission on Occupational Health. Its primary aim, which it achieves, is to examine various methods of providing for occupational health in countries undergoing rapid industrialisation and thus to minimise the adverse effects on health that inevitably follow uncontrolled economic development. Developing countries, aspiring to make up for lost time, do not regulate their pace of growth but want to exploit the experiences of the old world, which, by contrast, had plenty of time to develop ways and means of controlling the more devastating effects of industrialisation on health at work and the environment outside the workplace. It emphasises that developed countries should offer their expertise, but not take advantage of lack of health and safety regulations by setting up hazardous industries in third world countries. Multiple authorship imposes almost insoluble problems on editors. Contributions to a seminar, even by experts, will vary in their value. Exclusion from publication is out of the question but cutting to an appropriate length is necessary and has not been done. The longest chap-

ters, namely Setting Environmental Standards and Chemical Risk Assessment, contribute only marginally to the aims of the seminar whereas those on Occupational Health Services For Small Scale Industries, Occupational Health Services As Part Of Primary Health Care, and The Evaluation Of Occupational Health Programmes are much shorter and of more value to readers, particularly health professionals in the third world. Most of the first section of 20 chapters is devoted to specific issues facing a developing country, such as, pesticide poisoning, health services for farmers, farm workers, office workers, health professionals, stress management in the workplace, and occupational cancers. The second section of seven chapters is more valuable because they cover topics not included in conventional text books and concentrate on the vital issues of planning for occupational health and safety. They also give useful information to those who see the need for changes in the status quo of occupational health in developed countries. Particularly perceptive are chapters on Systems Approach In National Planning and The Evaluation Of Occupational Health Programmes. The penultimate chapter (27) describes occupational health services in Singapore and four European countries. Professor Rantanen’s account of the Nordic countries illustrates their advanced outlook on the future role of occupational health services. Firstly, the aging of working populations makes it necessary to modify work methods and organisations. Secondly, the traditional health and safety hazards have to a great extent been controlled. Further improvements require more involvement of occupational health services in the planning and design of healthy and safe environments and work practices. Thirdly, knowledge of exposures and health hazards in the work environment is relevant to environmental protection outside the workplace. This is a new area in which occupational health experts can collaborate with community health services. Much of this book will be of value to occupational health professionals, postgraduate students, and planners of health care, but it could have been much shorter and still achieved its objectives.

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