and 22 August 1998, and on the follow-up deliberations of the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee was formed in May 1998, in response to a request for information from the National Institute of Health in the USA.

The Steering Committee identified 110 experts and 66 who were able to attend the meeting. The attendees were from a wide number of specialities and hence the book offers a wide range of perspectives on the topics. The workshop itself focused on five areas:

- Biological responses of tissues to biomechanical stressors.
- Biomechanics of work stressors.
- Epidemiological perspectives on the contributions of physical factors.
- Non-biomechanical factors.
- Interventions to prevent or mitigate musculoskeletal disorders.

The meeting is summarized in the book in three parts. The first part explains the background to its writing; the second is a summary of the workshop; and the third and largest part is a collection of the papers that were presented at the meeting.

The Steering Committee report may be of interest to general occupational physicians. The third part of the book forms a useful research base for those wishing to take a more in-depth look at the subject.

As a consequence of its origins, the book is difficult to read and has no index, so those researching particular elements of work-related musculoskeletal disorders will have difficulty finding the relevant part of the book.

I would not recommend the practising general occupational physician to purchase this book, but it may be useful to those with a special interest in this area.

Louise Holden


It is well known that hospital telephone operators frequently mix up the occupational health and occupational therapy departments. When I was given this book, written by an occupational therapist, I thought at first that the publisher had sent it to the wrong editor. However, the author does envisage that some Employee Assistance Programmes might use it.

The book has been written to assist the recovery of mentally ill and chemically addicted (MICA) people. It aims to complement 12-step programmes and to provide help to improve coping (or living) skills. There are four main areas: time management, stress management, social skills and activities of daily living. In each chapter, there are case studies and activities aimed at increasing personal understanding. The writer does not underestimate the need for intellectual and emotional commitment to recovery, but tries to provide the skills necessary to take further action.

This book is simply laid out and the language is direct. The programme has been carefully evaluated and quality assurance materials are included. However, as it is admitted that most MICA clients are not in work, it is probably of limited interest to occupational physicians practising in the UK.

Michael Glenn


This new Atlas of Cancer Mortality in the United States includes >250 computerized colour-coded maps showing variations in cancer rates during 1970–1994 and compares them with the corresponding maps for 1950–1969. The data are presented as age-adjusted mortality rates, calculated by race, sex and geographical area for each of the time periods. The atlas updates maps from 1994, presenting for the first time data specifically for blacks. The data are also presented in the form of summary tables and figures.

This recent edition shows that previously observed patterns of high rates of breast, colon and rectal cancer have persisted in the northeastern states, whilst rates have risen in many areas in the south. Lung cancer has shown changes in geographical distribution corresponding to regional and temporal variations in smoking trends. Geographical clustering has also become more evident for cancers of the uterus, prostate, bladder and biliary tract.

The authors accept that mortality for fewer fatal cancers reflects not only cancer risk, but also stage of disease at diagnosis and treatment efficacy, which may vary between regions. As residential history is not available from the death certificate data on which the maps are based, migration effects cannot be evaluated. As coding of data is conducted nationally according to strict guidelines, geographical variations in coding should not be a problem. Although the atlas data cannot provide information on exposure to carcinogens, the authors hope that the updated atlas will be helpful in targeting high-risk populations for specific control interventions. It may also stimulate research by encouraging the generation of hypotheses in relation to the changing patterns of specific cancers. Two web sites are also available to further enhance evaluation of data illustrated in the atlas.

The data are clearly presented and should act as a useful source of reference for anyone with a specific interest in this field, as a means of analysing trends both
over time and across continents. It is definitely a specialist purchase, and anyone wishing more detail on the aetiology of specific cancers would find other data sources more helpful.

Adele Pilkington

Essentials of Occupational Skin Management.


This book was written as a practical guide to the creation and maintenance of an effective skin management system. It assumes no previous knowledge of the skin and is considered in its preamble as suitable for someone coming new to occupational health and safety, and yet, at the same time, able to satisfy the needs of the experienced occupational health professional. Its objective is an attempt to provide practical guidance on how to create and maintain a workplace so that it will not cause damage to health through the interaction between the skin and the environment. The approach taken is reported as a distillation of scientific evidence and many years of practical experience by the author in the field. Details of this experience and the professional basis for it are not fully explained in the text. The author is described as having trained originally in business management, subsequently studying electrical engineering and then working in many industries, before establishing a consultancy, in 1991, now known as Enviroderm Services, to provide technical support to industry on the prevention of occupational skin disease. His enthusiasm for his subject, and his lecturing and courses on the subject are noted. These courses are reportedly intended guidance for ‘occupational health professionals interested in a practical and scientifically based approach to skin management’. No information is given about their structure, content, qualifications arising from them or possible validation by national professional bodies, or if this book is based on the courses.

As someone with a lifelong interest in what the French physiologist Claude Bernard described as the environmental interdependence of the ‘milieu interieur’ and the ‘milieu exterieur’, I was intrigued by this book and the approach taken by the author to his subject. Dermatological engineering, described in it as ‘an attempt to link the knowledge of the dermatologist, immunologist, toxicologist, biologist and other scientific disciplines to that of the engineer so that workplaces can be designed, constructed and operated in such a way that the probability of damage to health through skin exposure is kept to a minimum’, is an exciting topic. The text discusses UK legislation, the skin as a barrier, occupations, workplace exposures and their effects on the skin, risk assessment, exposure control through engineering and different personal protective equipment, skin care, cross-infection of the skin, and exposure monitoring. Appendices are given for a skin management policy, recommended reading, a list of known sensitizers, skin assessment forms, a skin management action plan and a glossary.

Regrettably, I was disappointed with this book. Despite many good references to published literature at the end of each chapter, the text is discursive, sometimes repetitive, chapters such as ‘Risk assessment for non-respiratory hazards’ and ‘Investigating a problem at work’ could have been combined, the glossary is incomplete for many uninformed readers, there are spelling errors, and the detailed index gives too many inaccurate page references to the text. Although UK legislation is discussed in detail and a UK reporting system exists for occupational skin disease with published information from it, a table of German data is presented as showing that ‘it is clear from this chart that occupational skin disease continues to be one of the major causes of occupational ill health’. There is no critical comment for the reliability of these data, they are not cited as rates and, despite information given in the text, it is not known whether incidence or prevalence data are being shown. As another example, studies of skin problems amongst UK hairdressers have also been published, but in the text only one unreferenced Dutch study is cited. Some terms in the glossary, e.g. anaphylaxis, are poorly defined there, yet well defined in the text. Others, e.g. adenosine triphosphate, are poorly defined in the glossary and not cited in the index.

The acronym CATNAP (Cheapest Available Techniques Narrowly Avoiding Prosecution) is mentioned briefly. Economic issues are, however, important problems for occupational health professionals. Accordingly, as the book is centred around dermatological engineering, I would have preferred a detailed discussion of the concepts, models of approach and critical review of BATNEEC (Best Available Technique Not Entailing Excessive Cost), how this relates to the interdependence of risk assessment, risk communication and perception of risk, and how clinical needs, demand, policy, control measures and legislation relate to questions of cost effectiveness, cost efficiency and opportunity costs. Discussion of what is meant by CATNAP as an alternative conceptual framework could then follow and without, as I interpreted it, implied cynicism.

I really cannot recommend this book in its present format. Nevertheless, the subject is increasingly important. I think that both newcomers to occupational health and safety and experienced practitioners would benefit from a revised, updated, more succinct and accurately indexed edition with a comprehensive, cross-linked glossary becoming available.

R. Philipp