Book Reviews


This report sets out the evidence given by the British League against Rheumatism to the UK Royal Commission on the National Health Service. The evidence is supported by extensive data and commentary and by a detailed report of a five-day conference attended by experts chosen to represent different interests. The Report identified deficiencies and defects in the services caring for sufferers from painful locomotor disabilities — lack of resources, shortage of specialists, inadequate knowledge of many general practitioners, insufficient coordination of services which anyway vary in quantity and quality, prolonged waiting time for out-patient consultations, treatment and admission to hospital and a persisting neglect of rehabilitation. To remedy some of these, the Report suggests improved undergraduate, vocational and continuing education about rheumatic disorders and rehabilitation (with encouragement for all specialists to undertake medical rehabilitation of all patients under their care), closer integration of medical and surgical rheumatology services, appointment of sufficient rheumatologists to provide specialist services in all areas, and improved remedial therapy, social work and other supporting services. The supporting data refer to the prevalence of rheumatic disorders, the needs of rheumatic sufferers, the current quality and use of health, rehabilitation and related services, and the potential benefits from improved rheumatological care. The data are taken from a variety of sources of routine returns and from a number of special surveys, including the major epidemiological studies of arthritis, back disorders and rheumatological complaints. It is impressive to see the data brought together and be related to the development of services; it is also chastening to see the many gaps in the data, although such exposure points the way for further research. This is a useful compendium of planning data about the rheumatic disorders.

M D WARREN


This slim volume comprises the report of a WHO Task Group that met in Tokyo in August 1976 to consider effects of oxides of nitrogen on health. It is one of a series concerned with a wide range of environmental pollutants: the prime concern is with community exposures, and the aim is to assess available toxicological and epidemiological evidence so as to produce guidelines for exposure limits considered to be consistent with the protection of public health. Although the present volume is concerned with oxides of nitrogen in general, attention is focussed on nitrogen dioxide, as the most important component from the toxicological point of view.

Evidence of adverse effects on health is related mainly to findings from toxicological studies with animals, and from controlled experiments with human subjects. Experiments with animals have shown interesting interactions between NO₂ and infectious agents. While it is difficult to extend such studies into the human field, the report points out that findings from a number of epidemiological studies would support the suggestion that exposure to NO₂ is liable to increase susceptibility to respiratory diseases. The problem with most of the epidemiological studies considered was that oxides of nitrogen were present merely as components of urban mixtures containing other pollutants, such as SO₂ and suspended particulates, liable to have adverse effects on health. In view of the lack of information on the effects of long-term exposure to NO₂ in man, only a short-term exposure limit was suggested by the Task Group (0.10 to 0.17 ppm, hourly average).

R E WALLER