

Handbook of Occupational Dermatology. Edited by L Kanerva, P Elsner, JE Wahlberg, HJ Maibach. Berlin: Springer Verlag, 2000:1300 p, with 194 figures (70 in color) and 350 tables. Price: DEM 495.00 (hardcover). ISBN 3-540-64046-0.

Occupational skin disease is one of the major occupational diseases in our developed world. In addition, from many publications, it is clear that its prevalence is much higher than the official national statistics show. In addition, the (diagnosed) incidence in the foreseeable future will probably increase. Such an increase is probable for the following reasons: (i) improved diagnosis, (ii) the strong trend towards risk analysis, which is composed of the 3 elements of risk assessment (assessment of hazard and exposure), risk management (replacement by less hazardous products, if possible, limiting the exposure in various ways, including personal protection) and risk communication [which is rapidly increasing in importance and is very much on the lawmaker's mind, one good example being the congress about risk analysis that was organized recently by DG Sanco (European Union Directorate-General Health and Consumer Protection: Risk Analysis and its Role in the European Union, Brussels 18–19 July 2000)], (iii) improvement in quality of life, and (iv) increased awareness.

A good example of the awareness, at the level of the scientific community in this particular case, is the fact that the Toxicology Forum dedicated a full afternoon session during a recent 3-day meeting (The Toxicology Forum: European Meeting, Brussels, May 8–11, 2000) to (occupational) skin disorders. The subject of this meeting was the aspects of consumer protection.

Obviously there are already some textbooks available that are fully or partly dedicated to occupational skin disease. Nevertheless, the recently published textbooks have left room for a high-quality handbook on this issue.

The 4 editors of this book, leading experts in the various aspects of occupational dermatology, have taken up the challenge. In addition, the list of contributors is impressive, both in number and in competence. Each subject is discussed by experts. The result is a book that is well structured into the following 4 parts: (i) epidemiology, treatment and prognosis, (ii) substances and products, (iii) job descriptions with their irritants and allergens, and (iv) chemistry and concentrations of patch test allergens. The book ends with a very good index, which enables quick retrieval of relevant data.

In the first part, the very 1st chapter already states, in epidemiologic terms, the importance of occupational skin disorders, for which a prevalence of 10.6% in Swe-

den is mentioned. This chapter makes the need for better prognosis, treatment and prevention very clear, a need which the 1st part of this book in particular, but also the entire book, clearly addresses.

The quality of the 1st part of the book is very high, as illustrated well, for instance, by the chapter by B Forslind on the structure of the human skin barrier. It is a very good review of the understanding today of the various cells and tissues that make up the skin and protect humans from an essentially dry environment with its ever increasing physical and chemical aggressions.

Obviously, patch testing is discussed in several chapters, including a well-written chapter on patch testing with a patient's own materials at work, its importance, its limitations and its possible dangers.

The use of protective gloves in the occupational environment has increased very strongly over the last 15 years. The benefits of gloves are obvious in many cases, and gloves are mentioned also in most of the chapters in section 3 of the book. With the strong increase in the use of protective gloves, unfortunately skin disorders like type I and type IV allergic reactions, but also irritation and urticaria, have become one of the major sources of occupational skin disease. This important subject is very well discussed in a separate chapter written by T Estlander and her co-authors.

There are no clear omissions in the 1st part of the book, but if a point of criticism should be expressed, it should, in my opinion, be that of the rather limited room for discussing the weak points and flaws of patch testing (eg, the concentrations of the patch substances, the purity of the allergens in the test series, etc).

The 2nd part of the book tackles the substance and product aspects of occupational dermatology. All important substances and products, either individually or as a class of products, are clearly discussed. Good overviews are given of resins and plastics; they cover all industrially important substances. The various metals are also discussed individually, but I was surprised not to find a separate chapter on cobalt, which, in my view, would have been fully justified.

The 3rd part of the book provides an overview of the common allergens and irritants in dermatologically significant professions. Structurally and conceptually I was very impressed by the chapter by H van der Walle on hairdressers, obviously a high-risk profession from a dermatological point of view. In this chapter stepwise management and treatment, which is also the basis of modern risk assessment and risk management, is outlined, but obviously partly in a reversed order. The steps comprise evaluation of products and procedures, diagnosis and

ranking of the order of causative factors, reduction and, if possible, replacement, and, finally, monitoring and assistance.

In most of the chapters, personal protective equipment, mostly protective gloves, are mentioned, but unfortunately not enough guidance is given regarding the type of gloves to use or to avoid in all cases.

Finally, I want to mention the 2 chapters on printers and dental personnel, professions in which the number of cases of occupational skin disorders has rapidly increased and is still increasing due to the introduction of new classes of chemicals, which are rapidly replacing the formerly used products. Both professions are discussed in a thorough, but well balanced way. Somewhat to my surprise the chapter on dental personnel was written by T Rustemeyer & P Frosch, rather than L Kanerva, the first editor of the book and also an expert on occupational skin disorders among dental personnel. The quality of the chapter shows, however, that the authors were also a good choice.

The 4th and last part of the book is of very high quality. Unique and extremely helpful and important is the chapter "Dictionary of Occupational Allergens: Chemical Structures, Sources and References", authored by J-P Lepoittevin & C le Coz. In this part of the book complete overviews are given of patch-test allergens by B Niklasson and of vehicles and patch-test concentrations by A de Groot, both authorities in their respective fields.

My overall impression and conclusion are that this new book thoroughly covers occupational dermatology and justifies its existence. The 1st part is very readable as a textbook, but the whole book is truly a handbook, as it can very well be used as a reference book with very accessible information, a clear structure, a good contents list, and a good index.

This book, in my opinion, is more than a handbook for dermatologists and occupational medical practitioners; it is also important reading for both people involved in risk assessment and risk management and product stewards in industry.

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Health Effects of the New Labour Market. Edited by Kerstin Isaksson, Christer Hogstedt, Charli Eriksson, Töres Theorell. New York, Boston, Dordrecht, London, Moscow: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 1999: 344 p. ISBN 0-306-46300-8. [This book can be ordered from Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 233 Spring Street, New York, NY 10013, USA]

The globalization of economies has profound implications for labor market structures, causes rapid changes, and demands drastically increased flexibility. This book is based on papers presented at the international research conference Health Hazards and Challenges in the New Working Life, which was arranged by the Swedish National Institute for Working Life in Stockholm in 1999. The focus of the book, the health and social effects of the rapid changes leading to increasing long-term unemployment, temporary employment, and irregular employment contracts in the labor market in all modern societies, is important.

The book consists of 20 chapters grouped into 3 sections. The 1st section deals with unemployment and

downsizing, the 2nd with flexibilization and stress, and the 3rd with opportunities and constraints in the labor market.

The importance of the 1st section on unemployment and downsizing, with 6 chapters, is underlined by the fact that the estimated number of jobless men and women was 16 million in the 15 member states of the European Union in 1998. Moreover, there have been rapid increases in mass unemployment in the last few decades in many countries (eg, in the United Kingdom, Sweden and Finland). In addition, the official figures do not reflect the actual magnitude of the problem.

Both cross-sectionally and prospectively, unemployment has been found to be consistently associated with health status deficits across a broad range of health measures, including individual biological and behavioral responses, self-reported or objectively measured health and functional status, and mortality. The number of people at risk of negative psychological effects of unemployment is appalling and usually greatly underestimated. There are also grounds for believing that unemployment