

## BOOK REVIEWS

*Handbook of Occupational Dermatology* by L. Kanerva, P. Elsner, J.E. Wahlberg and H.I. Maibach, eds. Hardcover. 1300 pages, 194 Figures (70 in colour) and 350 Tables. ISBN 3-540-64046-0. Price DM 498/£196.50. Springer-Verlag, Berlin, 2000.

This multi-authored handbook is edited by 4 well-known researchers in the field of occupational dermatology. The book is divided into 4 main parts: (1) Epidemiology. Treatment and prognosis; (2) Substances and products; (3) Job descriptions with their irritants and allergens; and (4) Chemistry and concentrations of patch test allergens. The text covers all aspects of occupational dermatology. The number of contributors, 143, is exceptionally high. The number of chapters, 185, is also high. Some aspects have been dealt more than once but I could not find any marked controversies between authors. Most of the Figures are illustrative and of good quality. However, some are less sharp. The structure of the chapters seems to be standardized as far as possible. Editing this handbook must have been a real task and very time-consuming. The most recent references date from 1998.

## BOOK REVIEW

*Atopic Dermatitis. The Epidemiology, Causes and Prevention of Atopic Eczema* by H. C. Williams, ed. Hardcover. 271 pages. ISBN 0-521-57075-1. Price £70/US\$120. Cambridge University Press, 2000.

This multi-authored book, written by experts in the fields of atopy and eczema, is divided into 19 chapters. After an introductory chapter concerning ways of defining atopic dermatitis there are separate chapters on, for example, occupational aspects, geographical studies and the morbidity, cost and prevention of atopic disease. However, the main body of the text provides information concerning our current knowledge of causative factors.

Atopic dermatitis affects around 5–20% of children worldwide and, like asthma, its prevalence has probably increased two- to threefold over the last 30 years. The book summarizes some areas of notable progress in recent decades, for example in the cell biology of eczema and in the

Nevertheless, this is a real handbook with thousands of useful references for those who wish to obtain more information.

Those dermatologists who conduct patch test clinics will praise Part 4 of the book, which contains the chemical structures of important allergens and lists of hundreds of chemicals, together with proper patch test concentrations and vehicles. The Tables also include the names of patch test allergen suppliers.

Part 3 of the book is very useful for doctors working in the field of occupational medicine. In it they will find data regarding the allergens and irritants usually encountered in various occupations, from office work to the rubber industry.

To whom would I recommend this book? Firstly, to all dermatologists who see occupational dermatoses cases; secondly, to all patch test clinic doctors; and thirdly, to all doctors and nurses caring for workers who handle chemicals.

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understanding of the skin immune system. Also, the better understanding of disease burden is emphasized. Ten areas of notable ignorance are also listed, for example adult atopic dermatitis, the relative role of allergic and non-allergic factors in the pathogenesis of eczema and the natural history of atopic dermatitis, to mention just a few.

The book is nicely laid out with clear and concise Tables. At the end of each chapter a list of key points provides a very clear summary. This well-written book summarizes what is currently known concerning the epidemiology of atopic dermatitis. The book is highly recommended not only for dermatologists but also for other physicians interested in allergic diseases or eczema.

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