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## Book notices

*Toxic oil syndrome: mass food poisoning in Spain*. P Grandjean and S Tarkowski. (Pp 92; Sw fr 16.) World Health Organisation, Copenhagen. 1984.

Severe lung damage was the most prominent feature of the acute stage of the epidemic described in this book, which reached its peak in its sixth week, when about 1800 new cases were reported. The notification rate fell steeply to below 100 cases per week 10 weeks later and, although many individuals entered a chronic vasculitic stage of the disease (in which lung disease was again notable) and occasional new cases were still being notified a year later, the whole episode was swift and brief, so that few studies could be undertaken at the time. This report published by the World Health Organisation results from a meeting of experts convened two years later to consider all aspects of the disaster. It gives a clear account of the clinical manifestations, investigations, treatment, and pathological findings in affected individuals and it also presents a summary of the epidemiological, biochemical, and toxicological information which became available as the cause became clear. There are, under each heading, a remarkable number of uncertainties. For example, it is still not clear what the toxins were or how they were produced. Work is, of course, continuing on some of the problems and important lessons may yet be learned; but this small book is likely to remain a useful tool whenever this or similar poisonings are discussed because of its convenient presentation of a large amount of detailed observation made at the time.

*Allergy: immunological and clinical aspects*. MH Llesof. (Pp 474; £29.50.) John Wiley and Sons. 1984.

This book gives a standard account of practice relating to allergy by predominantly British authors. Considerable emphasis is put on the mechanisms of disease, including the immunology and pharmacology of mediators. There are specific sections on diagnostic methods such as skin tests, bronchial provocation testing, and laboratory investigation of allergic diseases. There then follows a series of chapters relating to each specialty. The largest chapter is on respiratory allergy. Also of interest to respiratory physicians is a comprehensive chapter on allergy in infancy and childhood, a clear account of the problems of food intolerance and allergy, a chapter on drug allergies (including pulmonary reactions), and a clear presentation of the role of immunotherapy (desensitising injections) that is in no way overstated. There are also chapters on allergy of the skin, eye, ear, kidney, and joints. The book is of more value for general reading than for reference. I missed a clear account of the taking of an allergic history, particularly relating to inhalant allergy. Moreover, there is no serious discussion of less conventional forms of allergy practice. The allergens discussed are also largely relevant to practice relating to allergy in the United Kingdom.—P S B