

## Book Review

*Foundations of Epidemiology*, 3rd Edition (Paperback). Revised by DAVID E. LILLIENFELD & PAUL D. STOLLEY. Pp. 371. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994. £19.50. ISBN 0 19 505036 3.

Among the cardinal strengths of the many of this third edition of Lillienfeld's *Foundations of Epidemiology*, revised by David E. Lillienfeld and Paul D. Stolley, is a clear focus on the unifying feature of epidemiology as 'a sequence of reasoning concerned with biological inferences derived from observations of disease occurrence' rather than on its subject matter which may well be diverse and eclectic. From this statement the reader is taken, via an excellent synopsis of the history of the subject, to vital statistics and on to observational and experimental study designs. Throughout firm bearings are kept on the two triads, favoured by epidemiologists, of time, place and person and agent, host and environment. The arguments are judiciously referenced from the literature which is commendably up to date. Further there is an excellent supplement outlining selected commonly used statistical procedures. If the prose has a transatlantic feel to a British readership it nonetheless combines clarity and consistency. Certainly, notwithstanding the authors' belief that the UK still only immunizes girls aged twelve against rubella, British work is well represented. Indeed the study described in the first chapter as an exemplar of the epidemiological method is an outbreak investigation, published in *Public Health*, by two Senior Registrars in Public Health Medicine in Surrey, of an outbreak of *Salmonella typhimurium* infection DT4 affecting 68 persons attending functions at a cricket club and associated with eating sandwiches containing mayonnaise made with raw (unpasteurized) egg white [1].

So, who should read this book? Just about anyone could read it with profit. It would not be my favoured introduction to the subject. That particular laurel goes to Gehlbach's *Interpreting the Medical Literature* or the more readily obtainable Barker and Rose, *Epidemiology in Medical Practice*. However as a vade mecum for almost any epidemiology or public health course it is hard to beat. I can do no more than echo the review of its predecessor quoted on the book's cover. 'If you are interested in only one book on the subject this is the one to buy'.

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## REFERENCE

1. Ortega-Benito JM, Langridge P. Outbreak of food poisoning due to *Salmonella typhimurium* DT4 in mayonnaise. *Public Health* 1992; **106**: 203–8.