

Understanding the noxious . . .

I.F.H. Purchase

Human Toxicology: An International Journal.

Secretary to the editorial board
Paul Turner.

Macmillan Press. 4/yr. £65, \$150.

Journal of Applied Toxicology.

Editor-in-chief Michael R. Greenwood.
Wiley Heyden. 6/yr. £20, \$170.

Journal of the American College of Toxicology.

Editor Mildred S. Christian.
Mary Ann Liebert. 4/yr. \$110.

FOR the third year in succession, three new toxicology journals are reviewed in this *New Journals Review*. This is a rapid growth rate for a relatively small scientific field and it is somewhat surprising that it has been maintained through the recession. Presumably toxicology will continue to grow while there is public concern about environment and human health.

Although the majority of toxicological research is carried out *in vitro* or in laboratory animals, the ultimate aim is to provide information about the likely toxic effects of chemicals to man. As Roy Goulding points out in the opening editorial of *Human Toxicology* (HT), the relevant scientific literature when viewed from this point of view tends to be diffuse and diverse. Following Alexander Pope's dictum that "the proper study for mankind is man" the introduction of a journal aimed at publishing information on human toxicology is to be welcomed. Apart from publishing original scientific articles, reviews and symposium proceedings, HT has an effective editorial. In the first few issues, the journal has managed to keep its emphasis very much on human toxicology either as a consequence of direct observations in man or the interpretation of studies carried out in laboratory systems. If it can shorten its publication time and maintain the high standard of its early issues it is assured of a secure future.

The *Journal of the American College of Toxicology* (JACT) aims to cover the entire field of toxicology by publishing original research in six sections (General Toxicology, Genetic Toxicology, Epidemiology and Clinical Toxicology, Mechanisms of Toxicity and Development of Non-Animal Testing Techniques) and covering issues and events influencing the field of toxicology.

Both the American College of Toxicology and the JACT have started fairly recently in the USA where they are in direct competition with the longer standing Society of Toxicology and its two journals (*Toxicology and Applied Pharmacology* and *Fundamental and Applied Toxicology*). Original scientific papers and

both abstracts and papers from congresses sponsored by the American College of Toxicology are published in JACT. In selecting such a broad field of interest within toxicology, JACT is in competition with a number of other journals in Europe and the USA. The subject matter in the first few numbers gives the impression that the journal has yet to settle down and find the right blend of scientific quality and direction. As it is supported by the American College of Toxicology it is presumably reasonably robust.

The *Journal of Applied Toxicology* (JAT) was designed to fill a void in the existing literature, namely the applied side of toxicology. The JAT aims to concentrate on research for which there are practical applications in industry, in clinical research and in the toxicological testing laboratory. The usual scientific papers and book reviews are complemented by toxicology updates (a brief review of the extensive literature on particular chemicals), forthcoming events and product news. The toxicology updates provide interesting thumbnail sketches of the toxicology of chemicals for those who

may not be familiar with them. The lack of toxicology updates in some recent issues suggest that the editors are having difficulty in maintaining a flow of suitable manuscripts. The range of papers published in the scientific section are indistinguishable from those in other general toxicology journals and they do not appear to have achieved their aim of concentrating on direct clinical and industrial applications of toxicology.

The three new journals are all supported by societies or associations. Apart from the obvious association of the JACT with the American College of Toxicology, HT is associated with the British Toxicology Society and JAT with the Genetic Toxicology Association. Toxicology provides information which is of great social significance and is not infrequently the subject of disagreement. It is encouraging to see that academic, industrial and regulatory scientists continue to associate in order to nurture the infant science of toxicology. □

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. . . and its control

Alastair Hay

Regulatory Toxicology and Pharmacology.

Editors Frederick Coulston and Albert C. Kolbye, Jr.
Academic. 4/yr. £52.65, \$65.

REGULATING chemicals is probably marginally more difficult than baking scones. At least with scones there are tried and tested recipes which, if followed closely, will give the light, tasty morsel that everyone looks for. Vary the ingredients too much and the product might have the consistency of rock or else be light, but leave a bitter aftertaste because too much baking soda was used.

All too frequently, discussions about the control of chemicals can leave a bitter aftertaste for all concerned. Industry is fearful of the cost of regulation. Regulations which are too stringent may lose it markets, and the toxicological assessment of chemicals is very expensive. Regulatory agencies on the other hand have a job to do. They must protect the public. The question is 'How should they do it?'

Every agency will attest to the fact that it is never short of advice on this matter. That advice is usually not disinterested. The views expressed in *Regulatory Toxicology and Pharmacology* are not shorn of self-interest either. However, this new journal does provide a much needed forum for debate about the issues involved, and the

tests required, for controlling the use of chemicals.

Unlike baking there is no cookbook approach to toxicology. There may be recognized tests and test protocols, but the outcome is different for each chemical. Interpretation of the results is central to the question of regulation.

This journal addresses itself to these very issues. It is concerned about usage and abuse of words such as 'safe' and 'safety'. "Safety is relative, not absolute" say the editors in their opening editorial. Few would disagree with this statement. What is at issue however, is how safe?, and who will be put at risk?

At first glance the journal appeared to contain articles written in the main by employees of industry — the first few issues reflect this. However, after three years of publication the articles are fairly evenly matched with contributions from both industry and regulatory agencies, and a smattering from individual universities and public interest groups. Most articles are about the philosophy of regulation. In addition there are reviews about the toxicity of benzene, dioxin, the action of environmental poisons on wildlife and predictions about new tests.

This journal has found the perfect niche and it should do well. My only suggestion to the editors is that they consider introducing a correspondence section. A letters page would provide some lively reading acting as a useful leavening agent in a subject area as controversial as the regulation of potentially toxic chemicals. □

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