

Easy does it

Jon Turney

Science Spectra: The International Magazine of Contemporary Scientific Thought.

Editor-in-chief Gerhart Friedlander. *Gordon and Breach*. 4/yr. \$9.50, £5.95 (cover price).

Odyssey: The Glaxo Wellcome Journal of Innovation in Healthcare. Editor Andrea Dingemans. *PMSI Bugamor BV, PO Box 3008, 1300EK Almere, The Netherlands*. 3/yr. Free on application to Glaxo Wellcome or the publisher.

YOU are never going to read more than one or two of the academic journals reviewed here, of course. But you might want to add one of this pair to your browsing list as well, for those moments when you wonder what all those scientists who are misguided enough to work in other fields are up to.

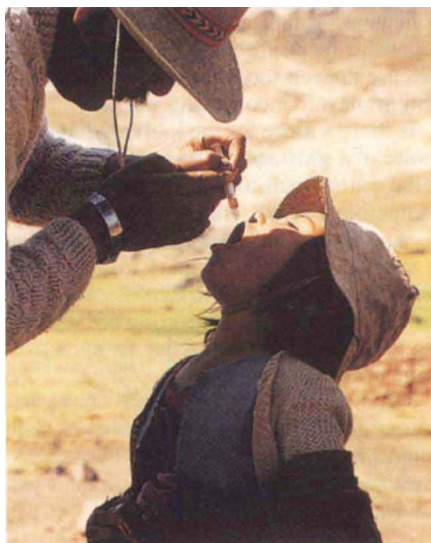
True, *Nature* will answer that question, in its way. But most of us welcome a more user-friendly presentation when we get out of field. *Science Spectra* is a new attempt to provide one, "a magazine for scientists, by scientists", according to the editor. The journal has several things going for it — the perennially worthy aim to foster communication between disciplines, lavish illustration and production, and an impressive roster of international contributors. What it does not have, in comparison with long-established contenders such as *Scientific American* or *New Scientist*, is a coherent editorial vision of the level and style of article to offer readers.

The result is a bag that is more mixed than it need be. The subjects are as various as you please, with eight or nine feature articles in each issue, although few would be novel to a regular reader of other science magazines. But, at the moment, the style varies too much for comfort. Issue one, for instance has a nice piece on why humans downgraded their sense of smell which assumes no knowledge whatsoever of evolutionary theory, but also carries a discussion of solar neutrinos that assumes that one knows what it means for a star to be on the main sequence, and can read a table of nuclear reactions. However, when the editors decide where to pitch their material, *Science Spectra* will be well worth a look.

Few such doubts with *Odyssey*. The magazine, written by a mixed group of journalists, scientists and doctors, focuses on latest developments in the life sciences, but only if they show clinical promise. There are also features on regulatory and policy issues, and well-chosen reflections on the research process. Although there are occasional editorial lapses in the review articles by scientists — an article on cytokines quickly degenerates into a list of molecular

biologists' acronyms — the contrast with the journalistic pieces is less marked than in *Science Spectra*. Perhaps the more unified focus on biomedicine helps to maintain coherence. Mainly rewarding reading, then, and yours for free. □

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From Odyssey

Polio vaccination in Bolivia.

Global welfare

George Gellert

Current Issues in Public Health. Editor Jonathan Mann. *Current Science*. 6/yr. \$129, £90 (institutional); \$65, £45 (personal); \$40, £30 (students/residents).

It can be difficult in such a multidisciplinary and fragmented field as public health to maintain an overview or distill practical knowledge. Even practitioners who studiously follow leading medical and public-health journals can find themselves overwhelmed or left behind on a vital and evolving public-health problem, controversy or innovation.

Hence *Current Issues in Public Health*. The journal contains 8–10 invited reviews by experts but written for a general audience of practitioners. It aims to fill a gap in continuing education by providing up-to-date information about important developments. Whereas other journals such as *American Journal of Public Health* present peer-reviewed results of original research, *Current Issues in Public Health* compiles, reviews and condenses this research along thematic lines and places it in a useful context for practitioners. Each issue contains four sections: public-health policy and practice; disciplines and themes; health of populations; and global health.

Has the journal achieved its objectives?

For the most part it has. The articles are concise and to the point, rarely exceeding four or five pages of text. But the reader might have valued the addition of editorials, letters or counterpoint views, as the invited reviews inevitably present only those issues that the (predominantly sole) authors see as meriting attention. The public-health issues surveyed are certainly important and timely, ranging from emerging and re-emerging infections to violence, under-served populations, environmental health and reform of the global health sector. The journal is a valuable applied resource in the literature for public-health practitioners. □

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Drug data

Anis Mir

Pharmaceutical News. Editor David J. Trigg. *Harwood Academic*. 6/yr. \$393 (institutional); \$252 (libraries); \$72 (personal).

WE are living in an era of momentous scientific and technological breakthroughs, changing disease epidemiologies and continual reforms in regulatory and healthcare economic policies. As a result of this pressure, the pharmaceutical industry is in a state of flux, reshaping its structures and strategy for drug discovery and development to cope with the rigours of change. For scientists working in pharmaceutical research and development, it is undoubtedly a formidable task to keep abreast of new developments and the emerging trends in such a varied and rapidly changing environment. It is perhaps not surprising that a new periodical appears that promises timely information on current developments in pharmaceutical science in all its aspects and with a global perspective.

In presentation and outlook, *Pharmaceutical News* reminds one of the prestigious *Trends* series of Elsevier. A close rival to *Pharmaceutical News* in style and content is the *Scrip Magazine: Pharmaceutical Issues in Perspective*, which with *Scrip Pharma Projects* and *Scrip World Pharmaceutical News* dominates the market for general pharmaceutical information.

The magazine will appeal broadly rather than to a specialized audience, with people associated with the pharmaceutical industry and pharmaceutical scientists in academic and medical institutions among its potential clientele. The contents consist of a regular leading article by the editor, David Trigg, that is generally topical and focused on health-care issues. Technical reviews and features on current topics are