Epidemiology: An Introduction.


The first edition of Ken Rothman’s Modern Epidemiology so indelibly stamped the future of epidemiology with his vision that the book’s initials—“ME”—spoke volumes. When Sander Greenland joined as co-editor for the second edition, the acronym “ME2” was immediately appropriate. Now comes “mini-ME”, an attempt to take the key messages of Modern Epidemiology and package them in readable format accessible to anyone who desires an introductory course in epidemiology.

The good news is that the repackaging is a success. Rothman has succeeded in preserving the intellectual content of his vision while making it much more accessible than in his two previous volumes. The author seeks to engage the reader at every opportunity, and the writing feels fresh and original. Although the content of this book will be very familiar to readers of the two previous volumes, the concepts are now illustrated with lots of examples, there are plenty of new illustrations, and the frequent use of sidebars keeps the material fresh and engaging. There is also a new section on clinical studies. Obviously, much of the material from the previous books has been omitted in the interests of space, but the stripped-down content covers the essence of at least the first edition of Modern Epidemiology: causal inference, prevalence and incidence, measures of association, study design, bias, basic analyses and the role of statistics, stratified analysis, interaction, and regression. Rothman has made great progress in honing his message—and more importantly, its delivery—in this volume. The book makes a great introduction to epidemiology, especially for the advanced student, and those already familiar with Modern Epidemiology will still enjoy this book as a quick, reader-friendly refresher.

The book by Abramson and Abramson, also an introduction to epidemiology, focuses on reviewing the epidemiologic literature, rather than on the conduct of epidemiologic research. Their audience is the clinical and/or public health practitioner who must read and synthesize epidemiologic research, but lacks the time and/or resources to pursue a formal course. The strength of this book is that every single page presents the concepts in terms of worked examples, many of them from the published literature. Through this reliance on worked examples, Abramson and Abramson succeed in making the basics of epidemiologic methods accessible almost anyone with background in the health sciences. All the key topics are covered: incidence and prevalence, systematic bias, basic study designs, casual inference, measures of association, and even meta-analysis and qualitative research. The book is divided into modules, so that you can work through a handful of modules a day for a week or two and emerge competent to review the literature from an informed methodologic standpoint. It’s an excellent idea, but the length of the book—367 pages—is surely daunting. It should also be noted that the methodology is a tad rusty in places, evidenced by the approach to confounding which emphasizes significance testing and the cursory discussion of the interpretation of confidence intervals. To their credit, they acknowledge the book’s limitations, and pepper it with frequent references to ME2 (strangely, this is something that mini-ME lacks). Possibly the weakest part of the book is the presentation of the material. The sequence of text and tables, with very few figures, give the appearance of a set of course notes, and doesn’t do justice to the writing.

For the injury reader, both books contain a reasonable quota of injury examples, though neither has a specific focus on injury. Rothman discusses the case-crossover study, a recent study design that been widely used in injury epidemiology, whereas Abramson and Abramson do not. If you like to learn from reading the literature, or if your primary need is reviewing papers rather than writing them, then Abramson and Abramson is good investment, provided you are willing to stay with them through the whole book. For all other needs, the readable feel and rich content of mini-ME makes it an excellent investment.

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References

Road Safety and Traffic Management 2005 unites with Egyptian Police Festival

Road Safety and Traffic Management 2005 has been rescheduled from October 2004 to 9–10 February 2005. For further information on Road Safety and Traffic Management 2005 please visit the forum website at www.trafficegypt.com or please contact the organizers at International Event Partners Ltd, London Office, 293 Queens Lane, Muswell Hill, London N10 1DN, UK (tel: +44 (0) 208 815 9570, fax +44 (0) 208 815 9571, email: uk@i-ep.com) or Cairo Office, Building No 1B Road 199, Digla, Maadi, Cairo, Egypt (tel: +20 (0)2 734 3550, fax: +20 (0)2 754 6106, email: egypt@i-ep.com).

XVIIth World Congress on Safety and Health at Work

18–22 September 2005, Orlando, Florida. Sponsored by the US Department of Labor’s Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Mine Safety and Health Administration, and the Bureau of International Labor Affairs.

For further information contact: Congress Secretariat, National Safety Council, 1121 Spring Lake Drive, Itasca, IL 60143-1201, USA (tel: +1 630 775 2056; website: www.safety2005.org; email: safety2005@nscc.org).

3rd Asian Regional Conference on Safe Communities

19–22 October 2005, Taipei, Taiwan. Organised by the Taiwanese Injury Prevention and Safety Promotion Association (www.tipspa.org.tw). The major objectives are to provide public health professionals and other interested stakeholders a forum for exchanging information on Safe Community development; to encourage the development of partnerships between governmental, nongovernmental, and other private entities; and to heighten public awareness of the Safe Community movement.

For further information contact: Safe 2205 Secretariat, Ms Cheryl Lin, 10F-2 No 51 Sungjiang Road, 104 Taipei, Taiwan (tel: +886 2 2504 4338 ext 19; fax: +886 2 2504 4362; website: www.safe2005.com.tw; email: Cheryl@elitepco.com.tw).