

News and Notes

MCPS, FCPS EXAMINATIONS

The M.C.P.S., F.C.P.S. Part I and II Examinations of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Pakistan, will commence from Saturday, the 24th November, 1979. The candidates should submit application forms with full requirements by 30th September, 1979 to the college. Incomplete applications will not be considered, according to a handout of the College.

SODA-BICARB PILLS REDUCE SMOKING

A common household chemical, sodium bicarbonate (or baking soda) may prove the bane of nicotine addiction in smokers.

Participants who completed a four-week programme to give up smoking did much better if they received sodium bicarbonate pills than if given vitamin C pills or no pills at all — just counselling, according to a study of a group of Bell Telephone workers done by the University of Nebraska Regional Chest Centre in the U.S.

LYMPHOSITE CLUE

A new testing method, taking advantage of changes in the behaviour of white blood cells from cancer patients, promises better early detection of malignancies than methods currently available, according to a West German researcher.

Dr. H. A. Fabricius of the University of Feriburg Medical Clinic, explained that a certain type of lymphocyte (white blood cell) that normally forms colonies of cells when grown in the laboratory, falls to do so if taken from persons with cancer.

Cells from untreated tumour patients have less than a fourth of the capacity to form colonies in culture than similar cells from normal subjects. In addition to patients with malignancies, this reduced colony-forming ability was found in the white blood cells of pregnant women and patients recovering from surgery.

Since the latter two types of patients can be identified with little difficulty, Dr. Fabricius suggested that the test appears to be specific in diagnosing patients with a wide range of tumours and merits fuller investigation.

NEW WHO PUBLICATION

Environmental Health Criteria 8: Sulfur oxides and suspended particulate matter. Published under the joint sponsorship of the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Health Organization, Geneva, World Health Organization, 1978 (ISBN 92 4 154068 0). 108 pages. Price: Sw.fr. 10.-. French edition in preparation.

The publication, the eighth in the series on Environmental Health Criteria, reviews and evaluates available information on the biolo-

gical effects of sulfur oxides and suspended particulate matter, including suspended sulfates and sulfuric acid aerosols, and provides a scientific basis for decisions aimed at the protection of human health from the adverse consequences of exposure to these substances.

On a global scale, the emissions of sulfur compounds into the atmosphere from natural sources are about equal to those from man-made sources. The former occur from volcanoes, forest fires, soil marshes and tidal flats, and the latter principally from coal burning and to a lesser extent, from such sources as the combustion of petroleum products, petroleum refining and nonferrous smelting. Domestic and motor vehicle sources have a disproportionate effect on concentrations in the immediate vicinity because the pollution is emitted close to ground level.

In this book, attention has been concentrated on the effects of inhalation, the most important route of exposure and consideration has been limited to sulfur dioxide, sulfur trioxide, sulfate ions, and particulate matter primarily resulting from the combustion of fossil fuels.

The vast literature on these pollutants has been carefully evaluated and selected according to its validity and relevance for assessing human exposure, for understanding the mechanisms of the biological action of pollutants and for establishing environmental health criteria, providing over 300 references.

Following a summary of the major issues and recommendations for further studies, the book reviews the chemical properties of the substances and the analytical methods involved; their sources in nature and elsewhere; their dispersion, environmental transformation, concentration and exposure; and their metabolism. The effects of sulfur oxides and suspended particulate matter are considered in both animals and man and the work concludes with an evaluation of the health risks to man from exposure to these substances.

The volume takes into consideration the views expressed by national institutions collaborating with the WHO Environmental Health Criteria Programme and the comments obtained from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the World Meteorological Organization, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the Commission of European Communities, and some nongovernmental and industrial organizations.

The publication will be of interest to departments of the environment and of health protection, to national regulatory agencies, occupational and public health workers and to plant engineers involved in energy production and other technological processes in which the pollutants may be involved.