



BOOK REVIEWS

From the Editor: The First Epidemiology Textbook?—Continued

In the October 1 issue of the *Journal*, when your Editor pontificated about “the first epidemiology textbook,” he fortuitously appended a question mark to the title of his commentary (1). Thus, he may be excused for misstating the case for the priority of Major Greenwood’s *Epidemics and Crowd-Diseases: An Introduction to the Study of Epidemiology* (2). More importantly, that editorial note stimulated the two extended commentaries by Bracken (3) and Lilienfeld (4) which follow. These carefully crafted book reviews, augmenting your Editor’s previous comments, provide *Journal* readers with a quite comprehensive examination of this important phase of the development of epidemiologic theory and practice.

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The First Epidemiologic Text

No doubt when Dr. Warren Winkelstein (1) proposed Greenwood’s *Epidemics and Crowd-Diseases* (2) as the first epidemiology textbook, he was expecting, even hoping, to be trumped by someone with earlier references. Here are some possible candidates.

Greenwood himself published an earlier work in 1932, *Epidemiology, Historical and Experimental*, which was published jointly by the Johns Hopkins University Press and Oxford University Press (3). Even earlier contenders for the first epidemiology textbook include: *The Principles of Epidemiology* by Clare Oswald Stallybrass, published in 1931 (4), which focuses on infectious disease but includes discussions of statistical issues and causality using Koch’s postulates; *Epidemiology, Old and New* by Sir William Hamer, a 1928 publication (5)—although one might argue that this is an account of descriptive epidemiology and not really a textbook; *Epidemiology and Public Health: A Text and Reference Book for Physicians, Medical Students and Health Workers* by Victor Clarence Vaughan, published in 1922 (6); and *Epidemiology: or, the Remote Cause of Epidemic Disease in the Animal and in the Vegetable Creation: with the Causes of Hurricanes, and Abnormal Atmospheric Vicissitudes* by John Parkin, published in 1873 (7). The chapters in this book include consideration of “The Doctrine of Contagion” and “Analysis of Modern Theories.”

The first reference to the term “clinical epidemiology” may be in the textbook of that title written by Yale professor John Rodman Paul in 1958 (8). Interestingly, in the second edition of the book, a Yale colleague, Alvan Feinstein, is acknowledged for his assistance in preparing that text. Feinstein would go on to write his own texts in clinical epidemiology.

Textbooks in classical times were rare. One of the first Roman texts in obstetrics and gynecology was written in the second century CE by the unfortunately named (for an obstetrician) Soranus, who had nothing to say about perinatal epidemiology (9). Hippocrates’ “Airs Waters Places,” written around 400 BCE, is often considered the first epidemiologic text, but this may be the least scientific of his treatises, and books 1 and 3 offer more objective accounts of epidemiology (10). Hippocrates’ “Epidemics,” books 2–7, have been most recently translated but are primarily clinical case histories, although book 6, chapter 7, offers insights into a “cough” epidemic at Thasos (11). Interestingly, Wesley Smith, the recent translator of Hippocrates, tells us that the word “epidemics” in Greek means “visits,” which “may refer to the itinerant physician’s visits to the towns in which he practices, or more likely to the visitations of diseases in those communities” (11, p. 1). Writing even earlier, around 430 BCE, Thucydides gives an interesting account of the plague epidemic in Athens (12, book 2, chapters 47–54). All consid-

ered, Dr. Winkelstein is probably correct in not considering any of the classical texts to be textbooks as the term is currently understood.

Thucydides was not the first to write about epidemiology. A cuneiform tablet circa 1400 BCE from Babylon describes a plague epidemic among prisoners and appears to show an appreciation of the contagious nature of the (unspecified) disease—perhaps making this the first text-tablet of epidemiology (13). This Babylonian tablet may place epidemiology among the oldest of disciplines, not the newer ones, as has long been believed.

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The First Epidemiology Textbook, Revisited

The city of Liverpool, England, has contributed much to the development of epidemiology and public health. The city was the first (in 1847) in the United Kingdom to have a Medical Officer of Health, William Henry Duncan, for whom both the annual Duncan Memorial Lecture and the Duncan Society (dedicated to the advancement of public health) are named. In 1931, one of Duncan's successors, Clare Oswald Stallybrass, authored the earliest known epidemiology textbook, *The Principles of Epidemiology and the Process of Infection* (1). At 696 pages (649 pages of text, the rest indices), the book addressed its subject matter in considerable depth. What do we know of the author and his textbook?

Information regarding Stallybrass is difficult to obtain on this side of the Atlantic. A search using Yahoo! disclosed little information. The first printing of *The Principles of Epidemiology and the Process of Infection* gives minimal biographic information. Library catalogs cite 1881 as Stallybrass' birth year, but no year of death is given. An earlier book lists two positions: Assistant Medical Officer of Health for Liverpool and lecturer in "public health subjects, etc." at the University of Liverpool (2). This earlier book, which focused on occupational medicine, discussed its subject with considerable facility, including insightful discussions of both pneumoconioses and cancer. Stallybrass' last book, the 12th edition of the 1923 one, extended its scope to encom-

pass all of public health, comparable to the current reference texts (3–5).

Intended for the Medical Officer of Health, the 16 chapters of Stallybrass' book focus on infectious diseases. In the book's preface, epidemiology is defined as "the science of infective diseases—their prime causes, propagation, and prevention. More especially it deals with their epidemic manifestations" (1, p. v). This focus was chosen because "[since] infective diseases still cause more than half of the deaths, and probably an ever higher proportion of the illnesses of men, it is hoped that a work treating of infection will pose of interest to others besides those officially engaged in preventive medicine" (1, p. v). The preface noted the eclectic nature of epidemiologic inquiry: "[T]he basis of the science is the knowledge of the process of infection of the individual, and of the responses to infection of the individual and of the herd. So clinical medicine, pathology, bacteriology and immunology all bring grist to the epidemiologist's mill" (1, p. v).

One might think that epidemiologists of this era, before noninfectious diseases became a focus of epidemiologic activity, were concerned about infectious diseases because noninfectious diseases were less prevalent. However, in 1923 Stallybrass recognized noninfectious diseases as amenable to epidemiologic consideration: "A very marked