

Ultra Low Doses. Edited by C. Doutrèmepeuch. Taylor & Francis, London and Washington, 1991, pp. 162, £29.50.

This book consists of 15 papers presented at an international congress which took place in Bordeaux during September 1990. The subject is intriguing and the spread of disciplines represented in the titles of individual contributions is impressive.

Although nowhere defined, 'ultra low dose' (ULD) appears to mean dose levels of pharmacologically active substances that are much lower than those previously studied or those normally used clinically. The list of topics discussed includes: the effects of ULD of copper on the facilitating effect of neostigmine on gut motility; the effects of femtomolar doses of certain regulatory peptides on the contractility of lymphatic vessels; the effect of ULD of recombinant tumour necrosis factor in overcoming resistance to tumour-inhibitory drugs; the effects of ULD of acetylsalicylic acid; the effects of ULD of various arsenious acids on the retention of arsenic in rats; the effects of ULD of uranyl nitrate on blood, renal and erythrocyte morphology; a failure to demonstrate effects of ULD of neutrophil agonists and antagonists on neutrophil superoxide production and adhesion; and the effects of prior exposure to non-mitogenic doses of concanavalin A on mitogenesis in mononuclear cells in response to a subsequent dose of the same substance.

Unfortunately the book, for which an inelegant type-face has been used, suffers from the incomplete command of English of many of its contributors and from generally low editorial standards such that errors of spelling and syntax abound - to the point of the text being incomprehensible in places. The title of the very first paper includes the word 'motricity' which has not yet found its way into any of the standard medico-scientific dictionaries that I have been able to consult.

Notwithstanding these criticisms the standard of many of the contributions is, from a scientific viewpoint, clearly high and homeopaths will certainly not be alone in finding its contents of interest.

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