

BOOK REVIEW

SMOKING. ITS INFLUENCE ON THE INDIVIDUAL AND ITS ROLE IN SOCIAL MEDICINE. By C. Van Proosdij. Pp. viii + 319 (including Index). D. Van Nostrand Company Ltd., London, 1960. 57s. 6d.

It is difficult to write without prejudice about smoking, and it requires the skills of experimental psychology, sociology, chemistry, physics and statistics as well as of pathology and pharmacology to assess properly what is evidence and what is wishful thinking about this remarkable habit. Dr. Van Proosdij is a practising clinician, and although traces of his strong feelings are frequently detectable, he appears to this reviewer to have made a reasonably balanced review of the extensive available literature. The eight chapters deal with factors leading to smoking, psychological and pharmacological aspects, methods of investigation, damage done to the human organism sociopsychological aspects, prospects, and a summary. No one knows exactly why some people smoke much more than others, but there is abundant evidence that smoking is correlated with various diseases, especially lung cancer, bronchitis and amblyopia and less strongly with coronary artery disease and peptic ulceration among others. In some of these diseases there is also evidence of causality, and Dr. Van Proosdij rightly points out the extensive evidence that smoking and lung cancers are causally connected and not only separate consequences of a common genetic background. This book is well written and produced, and is an invaluable and well documented source of information about smoking. The attitude of individual readers to it is likely to be correlated with their own smoking habits.

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