problems develop here. I suspect that he may still have to wait some time before the message is heard but meanwhile all who care about medicine should read his book.

Business is blooming

PETER J BAXTER

Worksite health promotion adds up to good business—that is the transatlantic message of this book. Good health is also good for business. It is good for the American insurance companies, which make higher profits when there are fewer sickness claims, and good for the companies that endorse health promotion: sickness absence and employee turnover are reduced, productivity is increased, and health insurance premiums should cost less. The author, who is the head of a major insurance company in the United States, perceived a few years ago that American industry and the insurance companies shared a common goal—to contain escalating medical costs—and that the way they could unite was through health promotion in the workplace. Employees would also gain by becoming healthier and living longer.

This actuary's dream became reality with the formation of the first wellness council in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1982, the forerunner of at least 10 more in other cities. The book is a crusading, personal, and rather uncritical account of worksite health promotion and is endorsed by several chairmen of multinational companies and aimed at business leaders. Its main value for health professionals lies in its description of the structure and operation of wellness councils, one of several recent innovations in workplace health promotion in the United States, but it is also of considerable interest as one of the first books written about the workplace and the health promotion movement.

Health promotion is more than just health education as it seeks to create the conditions in which healthy ways of living can develop; the workplace can be an important arena for its growth if only managements can be persuaded to give it their support. For a fairly small outlay firms could make a start by introducing company policies on smoking and alcohol, improving nutrition, and encouraging exercise. By subscribing to the local wellness council a company, irrespective of its size, would receive a consultative service, technical help, and advice on organisations—profit and non-profit making—that could provide the necessary services. Such organisations, together with government groups, schools, and universities, can all belong to the wellness council. Local health professionals can participate too: the medical advisory committee keeps an eye on the scientific soundness of the services and advice provided. Employees' families are not excluded: the wellness message is intended to reach beyond the workplace and into homes. The wellness council, itself a non-profit making organisation under the direction of prominent local business leaders, becomes the catalyst for workplace and societal change towards healthier living.

But does it work and can it happen here? The author admits that the evidence from company accounts is mainly anecdotal and not yet complete. In Britain businesses do not directly pay out a major share of total health costs as they do in the United States, and so the major factor in the development of wellness councils as described is missing here, but the private medical insurance companies could provide a stimulus if they offered lower subscriptions to companies adopting health promotion and health screening. Should not district health promotion teams be doing more to foster business support groups, particularly for smaller firms, perhaps even in a way analogous to the wellness councils, or are they destined to follow trends rather than to lead? The movement towards health promotion is undoubtedly growing apace among employees, whether in the spread of gymnasiums for City money makers or in the popularity of lunchtime relaxation classes for office and shop floor

America's Health in the Balance. Choice or Chance? H H Hiatt. (Pp 272; \$18.95.) New York: Harper and Row, 1987. ISBN 0-06-039063-8.

workers. Many large companies are responding and providing facilities.

As an intriguing example of the entrepreneurial spirit entering into preventive medicine the book makes a good read and ought to stimulate debate in health promotion circles everywhere—but its American perspective is likely to limit its influence in British boardrooms.

The Healthy Workplace: A Blueprint for Corporate Action. W M Kizer. (Pp 224; figs; £24.25.) New York: Wiley, 1986. ISBN 0-471-84531-0.

Manchester mill girls pictured in *Day In Day Out* (£1.25. Gatehouse Project, St Luke's, Sawley Road, Miles Platting, Manchester M10 8DB. ISBN 0-906253-19-5). A selection of taped reminiscences by women in wards 14 and 10 at Monsall Hospital, North Manchester, the book gives a vivid picture of life 40, 50, and more years ago, as well as reflecting the therapeutic value of getting elderly people to explore their memories.