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Review of: Lewis' Dictionary of Toxicology (Robert A. Lewis, ed.; Lewis Publishers 1998)

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Erratum

The citation for this review is *10 RISK 89 (1999)* in most commercial databases.

Lewis' Dictionary of Toxicology (Robert A. Lewis, ed.; Lewis Publishers 1998). About the author, acknowledgments, alphabetical listing of terms defined. ISBN 1-56670-223-2; [1127 pp. \$84.95. Hardbound. 2000 Corporate Blvd. N.W., Boca Raton, FL 33431.]

At first glance this book appears large and forbidding. By its very definition, toxicology is the study of substances that do unpleasant things to living beings. However, as Professor Lewis' definition of "toxicology" demonstrates, this field of study is much more than that. Lewis' three page definition of the term "toxicology" begins:¹

[T]he organized study of the nature, effects, and mechanisms of action of toxic substances on living systems as well as the application of the acquired body of knowledge to human interests.

It goes on to discuss over 20 sub-disciplines of toxicology, including, for example, aquatic toxicology,² economic toxicology³ and occupational toxicology.⁴ The definition gives the reader an appreciation of the diverse nature of toxicologists' work in these disciplines.

Professor Lewis' authoritative dictionary is a useful tool for a variety of practitioners, including physicians, scholars, lawyers, and scientists. Besides defining chemicals, poisons, plants, and formulas, all to be expected in such a text, it also provides clear definitions of related words and terminology, useful to both the scientist and the lay person. The definitions found in the book are clearly written, and encompass a variety of terms. Chemical formulas, biologic definitions, scientific and legal abbreviations, as well as cross-references to related terms are also included.

The book's usefulness is enhanced by anecdotal references that are included within many of the definitions. For instance, included in the definition of "polybrominated biphenyl (PBB)", the author relates how "massive livestock poisonings occurred in Michigan in 1973 due to the accidental addition of about two tons of PBB flame retardant to

¹ At 1049-1052.

² At 1049.

³ At 1050.

⁴ At 1052.

livestock feed....”⁵ In describing the poisonous *T. gramineus* viper of Asia, the author notes that “at greatest risk [of being bitten] are persons who harvest tea, cut bamboo, or clear underbrush.”⁶ Interestingly, the definition of “ethics” can also be found, as if to highlight that amidst the chemical formulas and references to toxic substances, defining the human side of this science is of equal importance, or at least deserves an entry.⁷

Professor Lewis credits the emergence of toxicology as a “mature science” to the combined efforts of persons in the fields of biology, chemistry, law, and physics, among others.⁸ His acknowledgment of the impact and influence these fields have had on the study of toxicology is apparent in the wide variety of words and terms that are included in the dictionary. Because of this, the *Dictionary of Toxicology* is useful to practitioners from diverse fields.

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⁵ At 837.

⁶ At 1068.

⁷ At 473.

⁸ See Acknowledgments.

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