Combined with the author’s lucid writing style and the intimate portraits of those individuals described in the text, the present work presents some fascinating insights into our understanding of the stress-disease connection. The book’s most debilitating weakness comes from the heavy reliance on one-sided case-report and anecdotal data in many of Mate’s inferences and conclusions. Presenting data only from those case-reports that support the author’s thesis, while failing to find or report on those that do not, is a serious challenge to the book’s credibility. That said, the book provides the medical scholar and layperson alike with a stimulating and thought-provoking read.

Brent M. McGrath
Department of Psychiatry
McGill University
Montreal, Canada

Disaster Medicine. By David E. Hogan and Johnathan L. Burstein. Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Lippincott, Williams, and Wilkins, 2002. 431 pages. $79.95.

Disaster Medicine by Hogan and Burstein is a welcome addition to the medical literature, designed specifically for the practicing emergency medical provider. The authors attempted to create a text with a clinical emphasis, which combines essential disaster preparedness and emergency medical care concepts and integrates them with insights from the areas of public health, emergency management, emergency medical services (EMS), and emergency medicine. The product is a comprehensive collection of expertise that will certainly satisfy any health care professional’s desire for knowledge in this area.

Hogan and Burstein bring together a wide variety of health professionals from the areas of clinical medicine, EMS, public safety, health care management, epidemiology and public health, law, military, public administration, and mental health to provide readers with a fundamental understand-

ing and appreciation of the many facets of emergency medicine in the face of disaster preparedness, mitigation, and response. The authors organize the text into six parts, each with its own general knowledge area. Part One introduces the reader into the general concepts of disaster medicine. It defines disaster medicine and discusses problems with medical response to disasters. This first section combines principles of emergency management and public health and acts as a primer for the experienced provider in highlighting key points in disaster management. Part Two is focused on disaster response, planning, and coordination. The authors draw on their contributors’ expertise and discuss several considerations in planning for the response to disasters. The chapter on hospital disaster planning is an excellent introduction for the reader to common problems and tasks faced by the hospital in a disaster. The latter half of the section describes the federal system of response and mitigation and describes their deployable resources and response teams that can assist local jurisdictions in managing large-scale disasters.

Parts Three, Four, and Five all discuss specific types of disasters and the medical and logistical considerations that need to be addressed in the planning, response, and recovery phases of these incidents. Part Three discusses natural disasters, Part Four covers industrial technological and transportation disasters, and Part Five introduces readers to the more timely conflict-related disaster topics and issues their medical management.

The last section of the text discusses the need for education, training, and research in disaster medicine. Hogan identifies paramedics and emergency physicians as the front-line first responders in disasters. The section underscores the importance of initial and continuing education among these providers and other healthcare professionals to remain adept at intervening during these events. It also addresses the need for community-based public awareness and education programs designed for the lay public
so the community can be better prepared to act when disaster strikes.

The authors highlight the paucity of research in the area of disaster medicine, and describe it as a “vital function” in the preparation for an adequate response from the medical community. They provide readers with a practical outline for carrying out disaster research and discuss issues including developing a research protocol, and finding sources of funding for disaster-based research.

Disaster medicine is an emerging sub-specialty of emergency medicine. It is an inter-disciplinary field that combines expertise and education from many areas, in developing a community-oriented response to situations that offer little or no warning, and have the potential for producing mass chaos and mass casualty. Hogan and Burstein designed a text that any stakeholder in disaster planning or response will find useful, timely, and relevant. The authors communicate information with a less didactic and more practical approach to the subject matter, one that providers of all levels of experience and education will appreciate. Disaster Medicine would be an excellent addition to any graduate course or continuing education program in disaster medicine or public health preparedness.

Michael J. Reilly
Department of Epidemiology
and Public Health
Yale School of Medicine

Operators and Promoters: The Story of Molecular Biology and Its Creators.
By Harrison Echols. Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2001. 486 pp. $65.00.

Operators and Promoters is a delightful and unique book, one that tells the story of molecular biology from simple beginnings through to the stunning complexity of modern scientific research. In my view, what makes this book so special is not the crisp, thick paper of its pages; not even the intelligent and clear way complex material is laid out; nor indeed its esteemed author, the late, great Harrison Echols (though those who knew Dr. Echols might disagree). Rather, what sets this book apart is how it tells this story: it focuses on the people involved.

As any researcher can attest, science is inherently personal, and in a field where so many clever people pour their whole lives into problems that fascinate them, the output of their work has always been dry, devoid of personality. Further, as anyone who has read James Watson’s Double Helix will likely add, this can be a blessing or a curse. Somewhere between James Dewey Watson and nucleic acids research lies the truth: science, presented as the work of deeply motivated, cunning individuals; people who interact, compete and collaborate, and whose names are irrevocably attached to the work they do — at least, in the eyes of their colleagues. Operators and Promoters brings this personal angle, and an appreciation for the personalities, quirks, and strengths of these researchers, within the grasp of any reader. As an outsider to a given field, you may be amazed how much more interesting it is to read about the hallmark discoveries while browsing meticulously crafted portraits of prominent scientists, reading biographical details and interspersed anecdotes, and following these fascinating individuals through a tiny slice of the paramount journey they undertook in uncovering their contributions to our understanding of life.

Like any volume that attempts to cover as vast a field as molecular biology, there are omissions and there are areas of quite significant detail. Unlike many such volumes, however, there are no color pictures, or multi-page figures of complex pathways. Speaking as someone who owns many molecular biology textbooks, these things are not sorely missed; especially when Operators and Promoters contributes something so different and so wholly necessary to a true understanding of scientific history. Operators and Promoters is not the ideal refer-