

In the centre's role as a think-tank a key preoccupation was education. Deschooling Society, Illich's most famous book, came out in 1971 and introduced his name to a wider, global audience. Convinced that the West's education system was collapsing through bureaucracy, numbers and the cult of professionalism, he argued against diplomas, certificates and the institutionalisation of learning. "Inquiries into a man's learning history," he said, "should be taboo."

Indeed, he wanted computer networks to link givers and receivers of knowledge and ready outlets for those who wished to attack received ideas within the educational nexus. It was the inefficiency of standard structures that appalled him. He held that an adult could absorb the contents of 12 years' schooling in one or two years.

Other books flowed from his pen through the 1970s, often after intense think tank sessions. Tools for Conviviality (1973) widened the scope of his technocratic targets to include television (for numbing conversation) and cars (for choking cities). Energy and Equity (1974) set out the pro-bicycle case, though Illich was often accused of hypocrisy for travelling by jet. He was in demand across the world at lectures and seminars, where he applied a coruscating Socratic technique to unsettle academic assumptions.

Limits to Medicine: Medical Nemesis: The Expropriation of Health (1975) argued that the health professionals had become an active menace to their patients, and he popularised the word "iatrogenesis" to describe a disease induced by doctors. His remedy was that patients, with products in

their own hands made available by the medical sector, treated themselves. The Right to Useful Unemployment and its Professional Enemies (1975) took the attack on to other specialist priesthoods claiming a monopoly of knowledge in their fields. He later applied the model to industrial designers and salesmen.

His books became progressively less alert to practical issues, more absorbed in intellectual history, probing popular attitudes and assumptions over time. They included ABC: The Alphabetisation of the Popular Mind (1988) and In the Vineyard of the Text (1993), which reflected a new focus on medieval literature.

The Intercultural Centre for Documentation closed down in 1976 but alternative outlets emerged in German universities, where he was highly popular. He held visiting professorships at Kassel, Oldenburg and Marburg.

His attacks on professions, neatly paradoxical as they were, often failed to make direct contact with life on the ground in mass society. His acute intelligence was not in doubt, however; on one occasion, he picked up a fluent knowledge of modern Greek in a day from a hotel gardener.

But his realism was debatable. Most of his later life was spent in a mud hut—aristocratically aloof, austere, absorbed but happy, just outside Mexico City. This gave him a very odd perspective on the real problems of the urban industrial West.

He was also a visiting professor at Penn State University and taught in Bremen, where he died having suffered for some time from cancer.

## THE JECH GALLERY .....

### Influential women in occupational health

#### Harriet L Hardy, MD: fighting man-made disease



photo credit: Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University.

23 September 1906–13 October 1993  
Country of birth: USA

**A** physician and industrial toxicologist, Harriet Hardy was a blazing force in industrial medicine. In a landmark study in 1946, she identified beryllium as the cause of chronic respiratory disease. In 1952, she established the National Beryllium Registry, one of the first registries to collect long term data on a chronic disorder

A tough taskmaster, she engaged industry and government in fierce argument, yet her essential impulse was practising medicine. During her 88 years, Hardy was a staunch advocate for workers in clinical care, writings, and court testimony. Just knowing Hardy was an expert witness, at times, persuaded plaintiffs to settle. She insisted on the difficult path of joint union-management decisions.

*"...unless there is definite commitment of executive authority, government agency, industry, or academic institution, occupational medicine and hazard control cannot thrive."*

Hardy's diverse studies included: anthrax, arsenic, asbestosis, benzene, beryllium, cadmium, carbon tetrachloride, coal workers' lung disease, cyanide, lead, mercury poisoning, mesothelioma, pesticides, and radiation. She was among the first to recognise the connection between asbestos and cancer. Despite ill health, she lectured widely on the importance of fighting man-made disease.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For keen observations, the authors thank Richard Chamberlin, Homayoun Kazemi, Barbara G Rosencrantz, Nancy Sprince, John Stoeckle, and David Wegman.

**D F Salerno**

Pfizer Global Research and Development–Ann Arbor Laboratories, Ann Arbor, MI, USA

**I L Feitshans**

Adjunct Faculty, Cornell University, School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Albany, NY, USA

Correspondence to: F Deborah Salerno, 2800 Plymouth Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48105, USA:  
deborah.salerno@pfizer.com