cow's milk protein intolerance, a point which reflects the personal rather than eclectic style of the book. Not that this is in itself a fault. Indeed, such instances add spice to a text which is also a model of clarity. The book is liberally sprinkled with superb electron micrographs supplied by Alan Phillips, an instance of where John Walker-Smith's mild parochialism in the choice of some of the material has more than paid off.

This is essentially a practical book for the practising clinician, and one should not therefore turn to it for detailed accounts of pathophysiological mechanisms. The message that children are not miniature adults could afford to be driven home harder, and a recognition of the importance of gut development in paediatric gastroenterology would be helpful in what I am sure will be further editions of this excellent book in the years to come.

I W BOOTH

Emergency abdominal surgery. By Peter F Jones. (Pp. 506; illustrated; £49.50.) Oxford: Blackwell, 1987.

Emergency abdominal surgery is the domain of the general surgeons. Their skills are learnt in the wards and operating theatres at all hours of day and night; this is where surgeons in training receive an immediate verdict on their diagnostic and management decisions. Professor Peter Jones, in the second edition of his book, acknowledges that emergency surgery cannot be learnt entirely from books but goes on to show how a book can give perspective, background, and clear guidance. The inclusion of abdominal emergency in infancy and childhood is particularly welcome as many general surgeons still have to look after these patients who are often very sick. Urological and gynaecological emergencies and problems arising during pregnancy are also given due prominence. Each section within the chapter has its own list of references, which is useful when only one condition is being studied. Clear Tables and 'decision trees' add to the value of the information and the whole book is well set out and easy to read. Some of the illustrations are disappointing, being somewhat amateur and simplistic, and add little to the text. It is a pity there are no photographs of radiographs or even of particular clinical or operative signs.

The book is well up to date with current controversy – for example, there is a detailed description of pseudomembranous *versus* delayed operation for acute cholecystitis. The whole text 'rings true': it is obvious that the author is writing from his own experience and not from a search of other surgeons' experience in the literature. He is also aware of the predicaments of more junior surgeons: the section headed 'On finding a normal appendix' will be a

comfort to many! The book succeeds because it is sufficiently large and detailed to be really helpful to the surgeon and will be a most valuable reference for surgeons at all stages of training working under different conditions and with varying degrees of experience. It can be warmly recommended.

ALEC B JOHNSON

Gastrointestinal neurophysiology (Baillière's *Clinical gastroenterology* volume 2, number 1). (Pp. 258; illustrated; £15.) London: Baillière Tindall, 1988.

Interest in the subject of gastrointestinal innervation and neural control has been at best intermittent during the 20th century. It was given a rousing send off by Pavlov, Bayliss, and Starling, but lapsed into somnolence, being woken only briefly when Langley described the enteric nervous system as the third division of the autonomic nervous system. It has blossomed into life again in the last decade or so, nourished by the discovery that 'gut hormones' are not hormones at all, but neuropeptides and neuro-modulators that are shared between the central and enteric nervous system. The publication of this series of reviews on gastrointestinal neurophysiology is timely and the editors, both distinguished physiologists, have assembled an equally distinguished cast of contributors.

The book covers not only the neurophysiology of the gut, but also functional topics including vomiting, pain, eating behaviour and pseudo-obstruction. The individual chapters are concise, authoritative, and well referenced; those whose interests lie in these areas will find it invaluable. But what about the vast majority of gastroenterologists who know little or nothing about this area of physiology? For them, the book will provide no easy entry.

The opening chapter on the enteric nervous system, by two electrophysiologists, makes few concessions to the uninitiated; some description and illustration of the morphology would also have helped. Lacking a useful overview of the ENS, the book is somewhat decerebrate.

Some other chapters in the book are similarly mandarin. The chapters on central control, disorders of defecation and pseudo-obstruction are written by clinicians, and are consequently easier for clinicians to follow. Among the basic scientists, only Andrews and Hawthorn have written in a manner that can be followed by those who are (scientifically speaking) relatively illiterate.

The editors state that their brief was to present the 'current state of the knowledge with a slightly clinical bias'; this being the case, it may have been unwise to recruit a team largely consisting of basic scientists to whom 'our directives . . . were minimal since