

Notes and activities

BSG Autumn Meeting, York

The 38th Autumn Meeting of the British Society of Gastroenterology (together with the AGM and in conjunction with the Autumn Meeting of the British Society for Digestive Endoscopy) is being held in York from 22-24 September. This will be preceded by a teaching day, sponsored by the BSG, on Wednesday, 21 September. Details of the scientific programme and social events together with details of residential accommodation are available from the BSG Secretariat, Department of Surgery, University College Hospital Medical School, the Rayne Institute, 5 University Street, London WC1 E6JJ, from whom registration forms can be obtained.

International Symposium on Intensive Care in Hepatology and Gastroenterology

This symposium will take place in Marseille from 26-28 September, 1977 under the auspices of the Société Nationale Française de Gastroentérologie, the Association Française pour L'Étude du Foie (AFEF), and the Medical School of Marseilles. Details may be obtained from Dr. J. di Costanzo, Hôpital-Sainte-Marquinte, Marseille, France.

Electrical Activity in the Digestive Tract

A one-day conference on 'Electrical Activity in the Digestive Tract' will be held at The London Hospital on 27 September 1977. Visiting participants will include Professor C. F. Code (Los Angeles), Professor G. Vantrappen (Leuven), Professor Sir Donald Douglas (Dundee), Dr. R. J. Levin (Sheffield), and Dr. J. Szurszewski (Rochester, USA). Details and forms of registration (fee £10) from: Miss D. J. Tolfree, Surgical Unit, The London Hospital, Whitechapel, London E1 1BB.

Books

Chromaffin, Enterochromaffin and Related Cells By R. E. Coupland and T. Fujita. (Pp. 400; illustrated; Dfl. 130.) Elsevier: Amsterdam. 1976.

Enormous advances have recently been made in knowledge of the structure, distribution, and function of that group of

granule-containing endocrine cells which have ultrastructural features in common with chromaffin cells. This book is the proceedings of a symposium which was therefore held in Gifu, Japan, in 1975 to bring together scientists from various countries working in this field. The main focus of the book revolves round the identification of functional cell types by ultrastructural and biological methods. In the past decade chromaffin cells and EC cells of the gut have been shown to be similar both in ultrastructure and in the ability to take up and decarboxylate amines, especially DOPA. This property is shared by non-argentaaffin endocrine cells that are localised outside the gut and pancreas, which raises interesting questions about their relationships and derivations. Pearse's postulate of a common neuroectodermal origin for the APUD endocrine cells was well supported by the papers given at this symposium. An important contribution was the concept, brought forward by Fujita, of the 'paraneuronal system', suggested by morphological, cytochemical, and functional studies which show the neural nature of the gut endocrine system. This is of particular interest in view of the recent discovery of a number of hormonal peptides which are common to the gut and the brain and the probability that the neural and gut endocrine elements form a single functional system. This is a well-balanced account with many high quality illustrations, making it a most useful and highly recommended reference source.

S. R. BLOOM

Metabolic Aspects of Alcoholism Edited by Charles S. Lieber. (Pp. 308; illustrated. £11.50). MTP Press: Lancaster. 1977.

Alcoholism is one of the world's major health problems and, although liver damage is often the most obvious physical accompaniment, few organs escape unscathed. This book examines the metabolism of alcohol and the ways in which it affects the body. The editor, Charles Lieber, discusses the various pathways of alcohol metabolism and the mechanism of liver injury including the rôles of toxic intermediates such as acetaldehyde and nutritional deficiencies. Seven subsequent chapters, each written by a distinguished worker in the field, examine the changes in the other organs. Malabsorption is a common finding and alcohol has deleterious effects on the structure and function of the small

intestinal mucosa. Folic acid deficiency may also have an important role here. Steatorrhoea occurs in about 50% of patients with cirrhosis with or without associated alcoholism and is probably multifactorial in origin. The effects of alcohol on the heart are discussed in two chapters with some unnecessary overlap and it is stressed that haemodynamic disturbances are present in the chronic alcoholic before any clinical manifestations of heart disease. Changes in bone are less well recognised and there are lucid descriptions of the mechanism of development of alcohol-induced osteoporosis, neuropathic bone disease in the feet, and non-traumatic osteonecrosis of the hips. Acute and chronic alcoholic myopathy and recent work on changes in smooth muscle function are well covered. All the formed elements of the blood may be affected and there are comprehensive accounts of the disorders of folic acid metabolism, the variety of types of haemolytic anaemia, and the mechanism of granulocytopenia. Alcohol is said to be the commonest cause of thrombocytopaenia in the USA! There are comprehensive chapters on the effects of alcohol on the central nervous and endocrine systems. The book is for the most part well illustrated, the chapters are clearly summarised and are supported by extensive up-to-date references. The book can be warmly recommended.

I. M. MURRAY-LYON

Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases, January, 1977, vol. 36, suppl. No. 1. **Detection and Measurement of Circulating Soluble Antigen-Antibody Complexes and Anti-DNA Antibodies** (Pp. 142; illustrated; £4.50) BMA: London. 1977.

The progress achieved in the detection and measurement of circulating soluble immune complexes has been brought together in this report on workshops held at the Kennedy Institute of Rheumatology last year. Much of this work is of course of much significance in relation to hepatitis.

Correction

'Gastric duodenitis, and circulating levels of gastrin in duodenal ulcer before and after vagotomy': D. D. Meikle, K. B. Taylor, S. C. Truelove, and R. Whitehead (1976, vol. 17, p. 723). The legends for Figures 4 and 5 should be transposed.