Books


The theme of this volume is biochemical mechanisms in gastroenterology and it encompasses topics related to normal digestion, absorption, and secretion as well as mechanisms of tissue injury, repair, and carcinogenesis. As a result, there is something here for everyone and without exception the chapters are well written, authoritative, and fully referenced. The complexity of some of the biochemical mechanisms – for example, those involved in the regulation of pancreatic secretion, the mediation of tissue injury, and the molecular pathophysiology of small intestinal sucrase-isomaltase – necessitate careful study and these chapters may be fairly heavy reading for clinicians and clinical scientists. It is to the credit of the authors, however, that they never attempt to oversimplify their accounts, so that biochemists and physiologists will find much to interest them.

Cell biology and biochemistry of the oesophageal epithelium is still in its infancy but this approach has promise in relation to the mechanisms of acid-pepsin and bile acid induced injury and potential in providing objective measurements which may aid rational therapy for oesophagitis. It represents a refreshing change from the standard manometric approach. Rees and Turnberg treat us to a superb and authoritative account of gastric secretion with appropriate equal emphasis on mechanisms of acid and alkali secretion and a clear exposition of the mucus-bicarbonate barrier and its pathophysiology. Dr Doe’s chapter on mucosal injury was appealing because he avoided the standard lecture on gut immunology and emphasised the role of effector cells and the potential for non-immune activation of the inflammatory response. Many review articles on the topic of pathophysiology of fluid and electrolyte transport in diarrhoea have appeared in recent years but Drs Dobbins and Binder are at their best here with a most clear account which will be very valuable to the clinician and clinical scientists. Glucocorticoids are widely used by gastroenterologists and Dr Scott gives us a most competent review nicely combining clinical and biochemical aspects of his subject. The chapters on calcium, iron, and mucosal enzymes are all first rate and include new information. The liver is perhaps under-represented in this volume but hepatic fibrosis is well discussed. Clinical carcinogenesis is perhaps too vast a subject for such a short overview but it would have been inappropriate to have produced a volume on biochemical mechanisms without including this important subject.

If the editorial board threw down a gauntlet to Dr Peters in suggesting this particular approach, he and his co-authors have responded in style and produced an exceedingly good book.

V S CHADWICK


This is a multi-author textbook (59 contributors in all, mainly from the United Kingdom and Europe), whose aim is to describe the optimal treatment of cancer, but it is by no means certain to whom this book would appeal. Some of the arguments for a definitive line of treatment are so dogmatic that unless the reader is already well-versed in the literature it would be difficult for him to get a useful critical view of any particular problem. Like many multi-author textbooks, the contents are extremely variable – some chapters are superbly written with good details of modern treatment, particularly radiotherapy, the best being on nasopharynx; others take a narrow line on treatment technique, such as the suggestion that after-loading of radioactive sources is only best achieved with the high dose rate obtained from a Cahtetron. Some chapters are positively misleading – for example, in the one on the treatment of skin cancers some errors of fact are made because of misquoting of other authors.

The gastrointestinal tract is well covered in general terms, although is rather poor with regard to radiotherapy and chemotherapy. The latter is not really surprising, in view of the long gestation period this book must have had – perhaps five or six years. Nevertheless, there is some good general background reading on the subject. Radiotherapy treatment planning and radiobiology are well covered, but the important if neglected area of terminal care problems could be improved.

The text is relatively easy to read, but the print is small and the diagrams difficult to follow unless one has previous knowledge of the subject. There is an amazing lack of good radiographs, particularly CAT scans. The clearest text to read is the references, printed larger than anything else (perhaps because above all this is a good reference textbook!).

This is not a textbook for radiotherapists in
training, since the techniques described are so variable in quality and quantity. It is probably best read by general surgeons or physicians with an interest in one particular aspect of cancer. An excellent book for the departmental library, it is far too heavy (in weight) for casual reading on the bus or train.

H F HOPE-STONE

**Digestive system physiology** By Paul A Sanford. (Pp. 150; illustrated; paperback, £5.25.) London: Edward Arnold, 1982.

The concept of linking a pair of books for preclinical medical students, one explaining the basic physiology of the system, the other a clinical text describing the diseases by focusing on the disorders of function, is appealing. The pair for the alimentary tract are *Digestive system physiology* by Paul Sanford and *Disorders of the digestive system* by Michael Hobsley.

It is very difficult now for any single author to deal with the whole of the digestive system physiology satisfactorily in a mere 150 pages. The choice of the core material becomes critical and the success of such books rests to a large extent on the balance of the actual material reviewed. Paul Sanford’s allotment of his limited space is idiosyncratic and, as he says in his introduction, could be irritating to some. A number of concepts are dealt with cursorily and are occasionally scattered across the text (namely, the absorption of B₁₂ is mentioned in the gastric secretion section but hardly in the intestinal absorption chapters), some are ignored (intestinal microclimate pH affecting absorption by non-ionic diffusion), but others are given huge amounts of space for a preclinical text (nearly nine pages on fibre, microflora, and gas). The effects of starvation on hexose transport across rat small intestine are discussed in detail but not the effects of starvation on intestinal function in man. In relation to techniques the classic everted sac of small intestine is lovingly illustrated but the equally classic short-circuit current technique using isolated sheets of epithelia is ignored, even though it has added enormously to our understanding of the mechanisms of absorption and secretion. The line diagrams are usually adequate but the choice of electronmicrographs and sections – rat liver cells and a cat villus – strange for medical students. The index of the book is extremely basic. The strengths of the text are in its fresh approach and the obvious interest and enthusiasm of the author for his subject which is clearly revealed by the style of writing. The book may well fire the imagination of some to enquire deeper (each chapter ends with a specially selected bibliography) but for others its occasional superficiality and imbalances will cause frustration.

R J LEVIN

**News**

**EORTC Cancer Symposium**

This symposium on the treatment of advanced gastrointestinal cancer, organised by the European Organisation for Research on Treatment of Cancer, will be held in Padova, Italy, 23–24 June 1983. For further information and registration, contact Ms D Eeckhoudt, Executive Secretary, EORTC Data Center, 1 rue Héger-Bordet, 1000 Brussels, Belgium (phone: (2) 539.30.20. Telex: 22773).

**Hemochromatosis Research Foundation, Inc.**

A Hemochromatosis Research Foundation has been established in the United States. Details may be obtained from Dr Margaret Krikkes, 164 Colonial Avenue, Albany, NY, 12208, USA.

**9th International Symposium on Gastrointestinal Motility**

This symposium will be held from 12–16 September 1983, in Aix-en-Provence. Papers are invited on any topics relating to the nature, function, and control of gastrointestinal movements in health and disease. The abstracts for presentation will be selected by the International Steering Committee. Abstracts must be type written, double spaced, on 21×29.5 cm or 8.5×11 inch bond paper (one page only) and sent by 15 February 1983 to Dr C Roman, Department of Physiology and Neurophysiology, Faculty of Sciences, 13397 Marseille, Cedex 13, France.

**Correction**


The penultimate sentence in the second paragraph should read: "The mean faecal bile salt concentration was 56-00 μmol/g and the output 1-01 mmol/day in comparison with control values of 22-38 μmol/g and 0-16 mmol/day respectively; both these differences were statistically significant (p<0.025 and p<0.001)."