Books

Alimentary sphincters and their disorders Edited by Paul A Thomas and Charles V Mann. (Pp. 236; illustrated. £35.00). London and Basingstoke: Macmillan (Scientific and Medical Division). 1981. Sphincters in the alimentary tract have been cynically classified as real and imaginary. This text of 236 pages and 15 contributors looks at the evidence for eight of them. There is a preceding discussion of their anatomy and a pharmacological study of their control. A summing-up by the editors generalises and might have more usefully served as an introduction. Shafik's contribution on the pelvic floor and, in particular, to anal sphincter anatomy is brought out by more than one contributor. The chapter on pharmacology is thorough – but the exogenous hormones still lack a role and cholinergic muscarinic receptors and α and β adrenoreceptors continue to hold the key to sphincter activity, though non-cholinergic and non-adrenergic inhibitory nerves may be expected to become more important later in certain areas.

The dominant chapters are, as to be expected, those where the debate is loudest – on the role of the gastro-oesophageal, the pyloric, the pancreatobiliary, and the anal mechanisms. For the rest, the cricopharyngeal, ileocaecal, and the rectosigmoid, there is less to be said because less is all-in-all known. For the lower oesophagus, years of measurement of the ZEP (zone of elevated pressure) has apparently not yet succeeded in equating it with the lower oesophageal sphincter and there may be a diaphragmatic contribution. At the pylorus, the mystery of when there is and is not a measurable differential pressure across it is not yet solved. For the biliary and pancreatic sphincters, there is a considerable digression into the assessment of their clinical problems but as yet nothing on the effect of papillotomy. The anal chapter discusses the importance of sphincter testing in relationship to sphincter saving operations and the management of incontinence, which is timely.

The book contains much that is useful about gastrointestinal motor function grouped in a novel way round the sphincters. This should interest workers principally in the field of motility. Those who handle the related clinical problems will also find information which is generally helpful in the understanding of the dysfunction.

ADAM N SMITH

Pancreatic disease in clinical practice Edited by C J Mitchell and J Kelleher. (Pp. 432; illustrated. £30.00.) London: Pitman. 1981.

As its title suggests, this is an eminently practical and up-to-date review of clinical pancreatic disease. The Editors have collected a distinguished group of contributors who have learnt and developed their experience largely during the last 10 years of rapid development in this field. The fact that two-thirds of the book is devoted to investigation reflects the main areas of recent interest. New ideas in both medical and surgical treatment of pancreatitis and cancer are, however, covered in outline, if not always in detail. It is not difficult to find minor points of disagreement, or to make suggestions for any planned future edition. For example the section on 'Current controversies' could well include a discussion of temporary and permanent biliary drainage; perhaps also it would have been useful to bring together in one chapter discussion of the less common causes of pancreatitis. This book is authoritative and welcome.

P B COTTON

Non-A, Non-B hepatitis Edited by RJ Gerety. (Pp. 301; illustrated; \$39.50). New York: Academic Press. 1981.

As infections with hepatitis A or with hepatitis B can be diagnosed with certainty, it has become apparent that there are other common causes of acute virus hepatitis, both sporadic and related to blood and blood products. The present volume discusses the various aspects of this group, now designated non-A, non-B hepatitis. The clinical features, progression to chronic hepatitis, epidemiology, prevention, and research in the chimpanzee model are all covered by acknowledged experts in this field. The widespread distribution of the disease is emphasised by contributions from the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan, Greece, and Costa Rica.

For obvious reasons, multi-author monographs on subjects where knowledge is advancing rapidly always suffer from delays in publication. The present monograph published in 1981 is no exception. The authors have done their best, but a definitive book has to await more specific diagnostic tests for the various members of what must be a whole group of virus infections. This book, with its very full bibliography, gives valuable background information, and is essential to all those interested in hepatology.

S SHERLOCK