commentaries on each chapter allow alternative opinions to be expressed with emphasis on certain aspects and occasional frank disagreement. The editors have, however, allowed one or two commentators to detail their own preferences and practices with little reference to the main text, as in laparoscopy in general surgery, which has resulted in the book being longer than was perhaps necessary.

J GUEST

Surgery of the pancreas By J R Brooks. (Pp. 492; illustrated; £49.00.) Philadelphia: Saunders, 1983. There has been a recent proliferation of text books devoted to disorders of the pancreas. It is an unfortunate fact that the American literature on this subject is bedevilled with a lack of clarity of definition with regard to the differing forms of inflammatory disease of the pancreas. The contributors to this book have once more failed to take this important matter into consideration. To the interested European observer the presentations recall a sense of *déjà vu* phenomenon reminiscent of days before the Marseilles classification of 1962. It must also be said that there are numerous instances throughout this book of a lack of editorial control. Many chapters read like a series of personal essays which have been brought together in a somewhat haphazard manner.

Nevertheless, the text contains a large volume of information with a very adequate bibliography and is thus of help to a mature clinician. This book would provide a postgraduate student with a misleading and confusing picture of the present state of pancreatic surgery.

BRUCE TORRANCE

Intraoperative choledochoscopy By A Leggeri, G Liguori, and F Umeri. (Pp. 117; illustrated; £33.00.) Sevenoaks, Kent: Piccin-Butterworths, 1984. Intra-operative choledochoscopy is a controversial subject. For some biliary surgeons the choledochoscope is an essential tool; others have tried it and then given up. The instruments have developed rapidly over the last few years, so that many preliminary reports rapidly became obsolete. Considerable technical expertise is necessary, particularly with the flexible choledochoscopes.

There are still insufficient data with which to make authoritative judgements, and the authors have wisely aimed to provide a practical manual, rather than a review. In this they have generally succeeded, despite having a relatively small experience. The book is short (117 pages), but well

presented, with good colour illustrations, photographs, and line diagrams.

Several criticisms can be made. There are very few references after 1980. The rigid type of choledochoscope receives only brief mention; it is considerably cheaper than the flexible version, and easier to use. Most surgeons starting to use choledochoscopy are concerned mainly about simple practical questions such as disinfection, and how to use equipment, such as cameras, which cannot be sterilised. The book gives little guidance on these aspects, and does not mention the recent introduction of instruments which can be fully immersed. British readers will be disappointed to find that the name of Professor Harold Hopkins is misspelt; the rod-lense system which he invented is reported as the Opkins system.

Despite these criticisms, I would recommend this book to all surgeons who are interested in choledochoscopy.

P B COTTON

ARR somatostatin Vol.3. By M T McQuillar. (Pp. 269; £35.) London: Eurospan, 1983.

This book takes over from where volume 2 left off in 1979 and attempts to provide a comprehensive review of the literature about somatostatin. Reading the foreword, one discovers that the book only covers the period to the end of 1981. This would be perfectly acceptable in a book published in the first half of 1982 but not in one published in the second half of 1983. In such a fast moving field of research, a two year delay is a serious deficit.

Individual chapters deal with a fairly large area of research – for example, biosynthesis, distribution, mode of action etc, and is divided and subdivided as appropriate. Each chapter, or in some instances, each section of a chapter, begins with a summary of the findings in volumes 2, followed under each subheading with a catalogue of published work. Besides quoting work which is out of date, the book suffers seriously from a lack of critical comment. The author makes little attempt to assess the validity or usefulness of any of the research, nor is there any synthesis of hypotheses which would enable the work presented to be more easily assimilated.

Presumably a book of this type is intended for a reader without an intimate knowledge of the literature. Such a reader might be left floundering, with the impression of a tremendous amount of work being done but with no general significance.

At a cost of £35 for a typeset book, which might be better entitled *Historical research catalogue* the market is likely to be small.

S R BLOOM