Correspondence

Inflammatory obstruction of oesophageal tubes

Sir,

The article of Philp, Gunning, and Bennett (*Gut* 1983; 24: 960-3) re-opens a very important aspect of a once frequent complication of oesophageal tubes.

This complication was discussed by me 24 years ago and the original slide is reproduced below. The operculum described in the article starts as an oedematous curtain resulting from pressure on the oesophageal mucosa by the lips of funnels that are either V-shaped or cylindrical, as well as circular. Mucosal ulceration and granulation tissue formation follow. Finally the muscle wall is breached with eventual erosion of the aorta and death from massive haemorrhage. This problem was overcome by the use of a tulip shaped ink welled funnel no wider than 25 mm × 28 mm, creating a pressure free angle between funnel and mucosa with the inner lips of the ink-well providing the armaturing of the funnel.

Derivatives of polyethylene; silicon rubber and latex were all initially used in the production of these tubes. Both these derivatives and silicon rubber frequently promoted such reactions probably because they harden with ageing, latex reinforced with nylon proving the most suitable material. Latex does undergo degradation but this degradation was a lesser problem than the complication described in the article and led to its preferred adoption.

Provided intubated cases are followed up carefully and the tube reviewed six monthly, an oval tulip shaped funnel made of latex and ink welled would seem for the time being to serve the patient best.

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Books

Gastroenterology Edited by Gary Gitnick. (Pp. 425; illustrated; £33.25.) Chichester, Sussex: Wiley, 1983.

Gastroenterology is a new title in a series entitled *Internal medicine today* which is intended to form a comprehensive postgraduate library. The series is masterminded by staff at UCLA and the content of *Gastroenterology* is based on a course for internists given by that institution. The book, some 425 pages long, comprises 14 chapters by 16 authors. Its approach is fairly conventional, the chapters being in the main based on the traditional anatomical divisions of the gut together with the pancreas and biliary tree, and various aspects of liver disease. The layout of the chapters is clear with many sub-headings and sections that make for easy and pleasant reading. Each chapter concludes with one or more case study and a brief list of current references. The style is not always even with some sections being severely formal and others written in a more chatty and relaxed manner; but this in no way discredits the book.

All the contributors have maintained an excellent standard but I appreciated particularly the chapter on chronic hepatitis by the editor Gary Gitnick which is a crisp and very clear statement of a topic that is frequently presented in a confusing way. The coverage of Crohn's disease is inadequate and I thought that an undue emphasis had been placed on the role of supportive psychotherapy in the treatment of the irritable bowel syndrome, or functional bowel disease as it is called in this text.