- 4 Caredda F, Rossi E, d'Arminio Monforte A, *et al.* Hepatitis B virus-associated coinfection and superinfection with δ agent: indistinguishable disease with different outcome. *J Infect Dis* 1985; **151**: 925-8.

Books

Stress and common gastrointestinal disorders: a comprehensive approach By G Dotevall. (Pp. 172; illustrated; £35.00). New York: Praeger Publishers, 1985.

It is the author's belief that duodenal ulcer disease, non-ulcer dyspepsia, irritable bowel syndrome, and functional constipation are '... stress-related to the extent that emotional factors are important in their pathogenesis.' Few gastroenterologists would dispute this proposition, but in this contentious field, multi-author books reveal confusion rather than consensus. As Grant Thompson showed in *The irritable gut*, a monograph on this subject has the virtues of consistent conceptual structure and literary style, while leaving room for another point of view. The latter is now provided by Gerhard Dotevall, a distinguished Swedish contemporary.

His approach to the problem was summarised by Engel: 'The dominant model of disease is biomedical, with molecular biology its basic scientific discipline. It assumes disease to be fully accounted for by deviations from the norm of measureable (biological) variables. It leaves no room within its framework for the social, psychological and behavioural dimensions of illness.' Those who doubt the dominance of the biomedical model have only to scan the pages of this and many other journals, and those who are insistent upon its adequacy probably suffer from inadequate exposure to patients (it's odd, when you think about it, that most of the papers published in medical journals have little or no relevance to the practice of medicine). Dotevall prefers the 'biopsychosocial model'; while this might be cynically described as the biomedical model with added fudge factors, so is life.

The problem facing the author was the construction of clear concepts from a mass of data which is both contradictory and inadequate. As was inevitable, he was not altogether successful. His review of the relation between the CNS and the gut is inadequate, and ignores recent advances in understanding the enteric nervous system and the predominantly afferent role of the vagus, while the brief consideration of peptides is unhelpful. He is on much firmer ground in his consideration of the

nature of stress and the functional syndromes, and rightly stresses the overlap between these syndromes. The main support for his concepts derives from his own studies on the efficacy of psychotherapy in irritable bowel syndrome and duodenal ulcer disease, and certainly this work deserves to be more widely recognised. It is therefore surprising to find considerable emphasis on the pharmacological management of these disorders, the more so since it is generally acknowledged that with the exception of ulcer disease, drugs are often little better than placebos.

This book stimulates by challenging some accepted dogma, and it informs by citing relevant work that is often not widely known. The references are carefully selected and appropriate rather than obsessively comprehensive. Gastroenterologists will profit from reading this book. The gain will be intellectual rather than financial; at £35.00 for 172 pages, the publishers seem to be heading for some sort of inflationary record.

DAVID WINGATE

Disorders of the small intestine Edited by C C Booth and G Neale. (Pp. 438; illustrated; £32.50). Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications, 1985. It is high time for a systematic book devoted to disorders of the small intestine. This book fills that gap. It is multi-author and international, though largely London based.

We are told that 'The book is intended primarily for postgraduate students and for practising gastroenterologists...' What do we require of such a volume? We need it to be authoritative, relatively comprehensive and at a high level. Physicians will look here for advice as to what to do when standard investigation has not given the answer or when standard therapy has not given the desired result and also for conditions not in the general textbooks. How does this volume measure-up? In most things, very well indeed. For a common condition, such as Crohn's disease, there is a very good description of the pathology and clinical features: diagnosis and differential diagnosis are helpfully discussed, and management is well categorised according to the state of the patient. For a rare condition, such as Whipple's disease, there is a lucid description of the pathology and of the heterogeneous clinical features, with a clear discussion of treatment.

There are, however, parts which could be improved in future editions. In such a volume it is surely unnecessary to state elementary points such as 'Diagnostic investigations should be chosen with care...' or that 'It is always important to inquire into the patient's previous history'. For a book