Books

Dietary fibre, fibre depleted foods and disease Edited by Hugh Trowell, Denis Burkitt, and Kenneth Heaton. (Pp. 433; illustrated; £49.50.) London: Academic Press, 1985.

Gastroenterologists are taking an increasingly active role in clinical nutrition, both meeting a present day need in hospitals and developing a logical extension of the speciality. The gut being concerned with food, its digestion and excretion, its relation to clinical nutrition could not be closer. Hitherto the science of nutrition has been developed in research centres away from medical schools, but also with increasing contributions from epidemiologists and food scientists. Now there is a welcome swing bringing nutrition into the main medical stream, with gastroenterology being an important but not the only developing link. It is therefore particularly appropriate that a younger active gastroenterologist Dr Ken Heaton should have been coopted to help to edit this book. It is essentially a second edition of *Refined carbohydrate foods and disease: some implications of dietary fibre* written by the two senior editors in 1975. Denis Burkitt and Hugh Trowell had made immensely important epidemiological contributions following up the seminal concept of Surgeon Captain T L Cleave RN, that a number of present day diseases were being promoted by the increasing use of refined foods. This theme is expanded but using the preferred term 'fibre-depleted foods'. Within its 433 pages this book brings together present knowledge and the developing ideas in relation to dietary fibre. The 26 chapters cover the diseases which have been postulated to relate in some way to fibre depleted diets. The scene is set by the introductory section with a historical semantic survey recording changing ideas and the present state of play. The chemical and physical properties are particularly well described by David Southgate and Hans Englyst with the physiological effects being elaborated by Martin Eastwood and W Gordon Brydon. Gastroenterology is fully and appropriately covered in the next eight chapters and provides a critical review of the role of dietary fibre in the aetiology and management of constipation, diverticular disease, cancer of the large bowel, appendicitis, Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis, functional bowel disorders, duodenal ulcer and hiatus hernia. The metabolic problems linked with fibre depleted diets are covered including diabetes, gall stones, and mineral metabolism. The book ends with a challenging chapter on achieving a better western diet and with a useful summary by the editors. Both in the role of a well trained general

physician and as a specialist gastroenterologist this is an important book to have readily available both for him or herself and for those working in the team. Expensive but excellent value.

FRANCIS AVERY JONES

Bockus gastroenterology Edited by J E Berk. (Pp. 4730 (in 7 volumes); illustrated; £595.) Philadelphia: W B Saunders, 1985.

Because gastroenterology (unlike cardiology or neurology) does not have formal recognition in the UK as a separate subspecialty, there are those in the medical profession who doubt whether much special knowledge or expertise is required for its practice. Such sceptics will be confounded by the new Bockus. The statistics of this seven volume work are impressive; 317 authors, predominantly (268) American, but also from 15 other countries with notably 18 from the UK, have contributed 4730 pages; they have been organised by four editors (Haubrich, Kalser, Roth, Schaffner) under the editor-in-chief, with Vilardell as consultant, and the first Bockus medallist, Sir Francis Avery Jones, contributing a foreword. The book is presented as a memorial to Henry Bockus, who, before handing over to Berk, was responsible for the first three editions, and who died while this edition was being planned.

To describe a work of this size as encyclopaedic is to state the obvious; at times the obsession with detail verges on the absurd, as in the black and white illustration of a steatorrheic stool which has pools of orange coloured oil. But while this may be the book that says it all, one must remember that its not just what you say but the way that you say it that counts. Just as American politics covers a spectrum from Democrat to Republican, so does American gastroenterology cover a spectrum from the patient-orientated and practice-orientated approach (Republican) exemplified by Bockus to the pathophysiology-orientated stance (Democrat) inspired by Ingelfinger and Grossman and currently exemplified in print by Fordtran and Sleisinger. The latter, together with other luminaries of modern US investigative gastroenterology such as Almy, Christensen, Field, Hofmann, Phillips, and Walsh, are notably absent from the list of contributors. Pathophysiology and its scientific correlates have little place in this work. Here you will find 25 pages devoted to 'gaseousness', but none on regulatory peptides. 'That's all very well,' you retort, 'but many of my patients are flatulent; none suffer from peptides.' In that case, these volumes may be for you.