BOOK REVIEWS

Baillière's Clinical Gastroenterology. Volume 7: 2 June 1993. Infectious Diarrhoea. By M Gracey, I A D Bouchier. (Pp 552; illustrated; £27.50.) London: Baillière Tindall, 1993.

Infectious diarrhoea continues to be a vitally important topic not only as an important cause of morbidity and mortality in infants and young children especially in the developing world, but also because it affects people of any age when travelling abroad. Furthermore, infectious diarrhoea is an important cause of disability among immunocompromised subjects. All these topics are considered by the international contributors to this important and timely book.

The book provides an important and up to date review of infectious disease of interest to physicians and paediatricians concerned with the treatment of patients with infectious diarrhoea. This book gives an account of this topic as it stands in the 1990s.

The book begins with a useful chapter on transmission and epidemiology by Gracey and is followed by a comprehensive review by Booth and McNeish of the pathophysiology of diarrhoea with good illustrative line diagrams. The various causes of diarrhoea, bacterial and viral are reviewed. In addition there is a clear and comprehensive account of parasitic infection of the gastrointestinal tract by Forthey. Arduino and DuPont discuss in detail the latest information concerning travellers' diarrhoea.

Gazzard and Blanshard describe the role of gastrointestinal infection in patients with AIDS. Particular emphasis is given to cryptosporidiosis (the most common pathogen in AIDS patients) and microsporidiosis. There is, however, some overlap between this chapter and that on intestinal parasites.

Perhaps the book's most practical chapter is by Cook who reviews diagnostic procedures in the investigation of infectious diarrhoea from the viewpoint of a practising clinician. Particular attention is given to recent advances in diagnostic techniques. This includes an account of rapid methods in aetiological diagnosis including toxin production, serological detection of bacterial antigens, and DNA hybridisation.

The important topic of rehydration and nutritional treatment of children with diarrhoea is reviewed by Rivin and Santosham.

The book concludes with chapters on treatment and prevention of gastrointestinal infections describing the roles of antibiotics and vaccines. Cook gives a valuable approach to preventive strategy particularly against travellers' diarrhoea. He emphasises that chemoprophylaxis, if used at all, must be confined to certain high risk groups. The latest field studies are reviewed.

This book is well produced with clear

illustrations. It is strongly recommended as a practical and up to date source of reference for gastroenterologists and others with a particular interest concerning infection of the gastrointestinal tract.

J A WALKER-SMITH

Gastrointestinal Pharmacotherapy. Edited by M M Wolfe. (Pp 332; illustrated; £46.) Philadelphia: W B Saunders, 1993.

This is an American multi-author book designed to furnish clinicians with guidelines for the appropriate drug treatment of patients with common gastrointestinal disorders. A distinguished and authoritative authorship tackles most of the drugs you would wish to know about covering both established agents and those in phase III trials, ranging from antacids to Zilueton. The book's alphabetical completeness is generally mirrored by reasonably systematic completeness of information. The editor declares that the target audience includes 'all clinicians who care for patients with gastrointestinal disorders' including 'medical students, . . . residents, emergency room physicians, family practitioners, general internists, and . . . physicians specialising in diseases of the alimentary tract and hepatobiliary organs'. This aspiration if realised would ensure significant royalties for each of the 29 contributors, but in reality the book is aimed at those with more than a passing interest in gastrointestinal therapeutics.

For that readership, it is an excellent text. Several of the chapters tabulate the therapeutic trials of existing agents and many of them also discuss early phase drugs as well.

Discussions on these include serotonin antagonists, newer proton pump inhibitors, and agents such as 5-lipoxygenase inhibitors, hydroxychloroquine, lidocaine, and interferon, which are competing for notice as possible agents in inflammatory bowel disease. There is also good and timely coverage of vaccines and drugs for hepatitis. I might quibble about inclusion of cromoglycate under the heading 'Promising new drugs for colitis' and the devotion of three pages to carbonoxolone. Again while I suppose nutrition is pharmacotherapy in the broadest sense I felt a section on nutrition seemed out of place and in the inevitable brevity imposed by the constraints of space encountered most dangerous of gastrointestinal problems – namely falling between two stools. The chapter is good but it could have been a book in its own right. These are minor quibbles and my only big complaint is of adequate coverage of the treatment of *Helicobacter pylori* is tucked in as a subsection of a discussion of bismuth.

Most chapters start with a description of the agents and proceed to an evaluation of their use in specific diseases. Others where this approach is more difficult are disease orientated throughout. The book is quite up to date with 2526 references. It even includes some of my own, showing that searching must have been pretty extensive!

C J HAWKEY

Annual Gastrointestinal Endoscopy. By P B Cotton, G N J Tytgat, C B Williams. (Pp 183; illustrated; £64.95.) London: Current Sciences, 1993.

This annual of gastrointestinal endoscopy has swiftly established itself as being a publication of real merit serving to bring practising endoscopists up to date with what is happening in the field. This is in no small part due to the distinguished editors who have clearly put their stamp on the presentations, which are of very high quality with good illustrations. The volume starts with rather a philosophical look at the changing pattern of our work with increase in minimally invasive techniques and the impact this will have upon training and gastrointestinal practice with changes also in the type of support that we will need. This is a thoughtful start to what is otherwise an update on what is happening in the endoscopic world. Although progress is steady there is obviously a limit to the number of new ideas and much of the work described here is consolidating and builds on earlier work.

The book's structure follows an established pattern with illustrated chapters on all endoscopic procedures, which are referenced and the important papers reviewed being starred and summarised in a few lines. At the end of the volume there is an important reference source of the current world publications under topic headings.

I felt that none of the chapters was weak and overlap between chapters was infrequent. The views that were expressed were of real practical help, for example, there was an excellent review of the treatment of an instrumentally perforated oesophagus. Lasers were reviewed in a balanced way, but the author also indicated future developments and the potential for further progress as a result of advancing technology.

I do not know if it was by design but on the penultimate page of the text there is a marvellous illustration from Japan of an early depressed caecal carcinoma. There can hardly be a colonoscopist who can look at that excellent picture and fail to feel nervous about similar lesions that could so readily have been missed in the past. It just serves to keep us all a little humble and realise the need to keep abreast of new developments.

D COLIN-JONES

If you wish to order or require further information regarding the titles reviewed here, please write to or telephone the BMJ Bookshop, PO Box 295, London WC1H 9JR. Tel: 071 383 6244. Fax: 071 383 6662. Books are supplied post free in the UK and for BFPO addresses. Overseas customers should add 15% for postage and packing. Payment can be made by cheque in sterling drawn on a UK bank or by credit card (Mastercard, Visa, or American Express), stating card number, expiry date, and full name. (The price and availability are occasionally subject to revision by the Publishers.)