The weaknesses are scanty and well localised. For instance, in one of the home team's contributions, claiming to show a reduction of gliadin toxicity by enzymic cleavage of a carbohydrate side chain, the key to the symbols in the figures is defective, nullifying detailed interpretation.

The chief strength is that this is a faithful piece of reporting, conveying the atmosphere in the discussions as well as accurately presenting the papers.

J. S. STEWART

Disturbances in Lipid and Lipoprotein Metabolism Edited by John M. Dietschy, Antonio M. Gott, Jr., and Joseph A. Ontko. (Pp. 295. Illustrated. \$25.) Waverley Press: Baltimore. 1978.

Most gastroenterologists will find something of interest in this book which is based on material presented at a Symposium on Lipoprotein and Lipid Metabolism sponsored by the American Physiological Society.

Much of the text is concerned with basic information about lipid metabolism. The early chapters cover lipid movement across biological membranes and, although there is a tendency for different chapters to duplicate information, this section is recommended as a lucid account of topics such as monomolecular diffusion and the unstirred water layer. The description of lipid absorption is excellent, as is the chapter dealing with the catabolism of triglyceride-rich lipoproteins to remnant lipoproteins. Thereafter, subsequent chapters deal with the synthesis of the various types of lipoprotein and the regulatory processes which are involved. A final section covers free fatty acid metabolism.

There are 16 chapters all of which are of a very high standard. The writing is lucid and concise, references are numerous and current and the text is complemented by useful diagrams. This book is thoroughly recommended.

I. A. D. BOUCHIER

Mucus in Health and Disease *Advances in Experimental Medicine and Biology*, Vol. 89 Edited by M. Elstein and D. V. Parke. (Pp. 558. \$54.00.) Plenum Press: New York and London. 1978.

The first international symposium on mucus in health and disease was held in Guildford in September 1976 and this book is a collection of the papers delivered on that occasion. There are sections on

mucus production and regulation; physical and chemical properties of mucus, and mucus in disease. Biochemists, biophysicists, and physiologists provide helpful surveys of their views of mucus. Gastroenterologists will find much of interest here. Particularly stimulating is the chapter by Jerzy Glass and Slomiany on derangements of mucus in gastric disease.

It is clear that much is known about mucus production, its biochemical nature, and physical properties. Equally, it must be said that the enquiring gastroenterologist will not find many answers to his questions about the function of mucus in the stomach and intestine in health or disease. Perhaps the next symposium, as there surely will be one, will address itself to these difficult aspects. Meanwhile, this book provides a useful up-to-date account of the state of the art.

L. A. TURNBERG

Glucagon: its Role in Physiology and Clinical Medicine Edited by P. P. Foa, J. S. Bajaj, and N. L. Foa. (Pp. 793. Illustrated.) Springer: New York. 1977.

Late in 1976 on the shores of a picturesque lake in the hills of Cashmere an international meeting on glucagon was held. This, the record of the proceedings, is an excellent summary of many diverse aspects of the subject. Glucagon has two main physiological roles, one in glucose homeostasis, by regulating hepatic glucose production and another as a powerful catabolic stress hormone causing hyperglycaemia, increased ketogenesis, and depressing plasma amino acid concentrations. It has only recently been possible to investigate the relative importance of these two roles by use of the glucagon inhibitor somatostatin and this work is thoroughly discussed. Also covered are the mechanisms that control glucagon release including the innervation of the α cell, effects of other hormones, and the relative importance of various metabolites. The importance of glucagon in disease, particularly diabetes, is well covered (this meeting was a satellite to the IXth International Diabetes meeting) and there is a section on pancreatic glucagonomas. The use of glucagon as a pharmacological agent is less covered but this may be appropriate as its many proposed uses are in reality poorly established. This is a most useful reference volume and, within the limitations of symposia proceedings, can be thoroughly recommended.

S. R. BLOOM

The Acute Abdomen for the Man on the Spot By J. C. Angell. (Pp. 116. £1.95.) Pitman Medical: London. 1978.

Management of the acute abdomen is well covered by textbooks, including those by Hamilton Bailey, Zachary Cope, Peter Jones, and John Shepherd. This short book by Mr Angell, however, provides something quite different. He has attempted to reproduce the teaching and advice that a registrar might receive from his chief on ward rounds, and he has succeeded outstandingly. It is no surprise to find that this popular book is now in its third edition, and pleasing that it still costs less than £2.

He gives colourful descriptions of his own cases, both the successes and the failures, and his skill lies in highlighting the diagnostic pitfalls that may occur. But it is his ability to think himself back to his own time as 'the man on the spot' that gives this book such immediate appeal to the junior registrar or houseman of today.

As well as his 'ward round' of the major surgical causes of an acute abdomen in their typical and atypical presentations, he gives many hints on the management of medical illnesses which mimic an acute abdomen, as well as suggestions on ordering investigations, eliciting physical signs, and on how he manages problem patients. He ends with a few thoughts on surgical technique. The whole book is written in so amusing and forthright a style that, however busy a registrar may be, he will have no difficulty in finding time to enjoy reading it.

J. P. S. COCHRANE

Brief Notes

Medical Acid-Base Balance: the Basic Principles By Michael L. G. Gardner. (Pp. 125. Figures. £3.95.) Bailliere Tindall: London. 1978.

Medical Acid-Base Balance was written primarily as an introductory text for preclinical and clinical students and is based largely on a course which has been taught to them over a number of years. It will also be useful, however, to anyone who needs to learn or relearn the principles of the subject.