Notes and activities

British Digestive Foundation

The following awards have been made (1 June):

1 *The Derek Crouch Research Fellowship* Dr Michael Dutt, to work at St Thomas' Hospital under Dr R. P. H. Thompson and Dr B. Creamer studying the role of the gall bladder in gall stone formation and new methods to promote stone dissolution.

2 *The Smith Kline & French Research Fellowship* Mr Gareth Davies, to work at St George's Hospital under Professor J. Hermon-Taylor studying the biology of human gastric pancreatic and colonic cancers.

3 *The Markland Research Fellowship* Dr David Dawson, to work at the Manchester Royal Infirmary under Dr R. E. Holmes on *in vitro* studies of ionic transport in the intestinal mucosa.

National Medical Collection

The Wellcome Museum of the History of Medicine has been permanently loaned to the Science Museum to form the basis of a national medical collection, and it is hoped by 1980 to display in the galleries objects representing the development of medicine in the last 150 years. A project is also under way to acquire significant recent medical artefacts with a view to forming a permanent archive.

A large section on gastrointestinal medicine is envisaged, but, at present, the collection is relatively deficient in nearly all areas from about 1900 onwards. The Historian of the museum would like to receive pre-war material such as endoscopes, and later artefacts such as biopsy capsules. Inquiries about the project should be addressed to Dr Christopher Lawrence, Historian, Wellcome Museum of the History of Medicine, Science Museum, South Kensington, London SW7. (Tel. 01-589 3456, ext. 565).

VI Asian-Pacific Congress of Gastroenterology

The Congress will be held at Auckland, New Zealand from 10 to 14 February 1980, and will consist of free papers, poster sessions and symposia which will feature a number of speakers of international repute. The Congress will be followed by a one day meeting of the

Asian-Pacific Study Group of the Liver on the theme of hepatitis and hepatoma. The deadline for submission of abstracts and registration is 1 September 1979. Details from VI Asian-Pacific Congress of Gastroenterology, Department of Gastroenterology, Auckland Hospital, Park Road, Auckland, New Zealand.

Current Applications of Radioisotopes in Gastroenterology

On 17 October 1979, Postgraduate Medical Centre, City Hospital Nottingham. Details from: Dr J. H. Todd, Medical Physics Department, City Hospital, Hucknall Road, Nottingham NG5 1PB.

European Association for the Study of the Liver (EASL)

The 14th meeting of the EASL will be held in Düsseldorf, FRG., 13 to 15 September 1979. The programme will consist of 36 free papers, two symposia, and three working parties and a poster session from European centres of hepatology. For further information contact, President EASL, Professor G. Strohmeyer, Department of Medicine D, University Hospital D-4000 Düsseldorf, or Professor Arnold, Klinikum Charlottenburg, Free University Berlin, Spandauer Damm 130 D-1000 Berlin 19.

Books

Clinical Tests of Gastric Secretion By J. H. Baron. (Pp. 277. Illustrated. £12.50.) Macmillan: London. 1978.

Dr Baron has written a splendid book. It has three parts: a review of all the tests of gastric secretion, a detailed summary of the changes in gastric secretion that occur in disease of the upper gastrointestinal tract, and finally a survey of the clinical usefulness of gastric secretion tests.

Clinical gastroenterologists will be relieved to hear Dr Baron's opinion that virtually the only use for such tests is in the planning of revision surgery for recurrent ulceration. An appendix to the book describes a formidable four-hour basal-insulin-pentagastrin test for this indication.

The book will be popular with anyone considering publication in the field of peptic ulcer; every statement is justified by exhaustive quotation of literature using a total of 1287 references.

R. E. POUNDER

Primary Liver Tumours Edited by H. Remmer, H. M. Bolt, P. Bannasch, and H. Popper. (Pp. 611. Illustrated. £15.95.) MTP Press: Lancaster. 1978.

This book summarises the proceedings of an International Symposium on Primary Liver Tumours held in Titisee, West Germany in October 1977. At this meeting knowledge about the pathology, histology, and histogenesis of primary liver cancer was reviewed. In addition, several aspects of carcinogenesis relevant to primary liver cancer were discussed including the role of aflatoxins and the hepatitis B virus.

The book is long with more than 500 pages. The editing is good and the book will probably find its place as a standard text on primary liver cancer for a number of years. The book is highly recommended for departmental libraries serving those with an interest in hepatology. Individuals might think carefully before buying it because many sections will prove hard reading. Nevertheless, the attention of the clinical hepatologist can be drawn to the chapters on hepatocarcinogens (R. Preussmann), sex hormones (S. Sherlock), and the hepatitis B virus (A. J. Zuckerman), as well as to the excellent section of the book on the epidemiology, pathology, and clinical aspects of liver tumours. Histopathologists should take note of the section dealing with the detailed pathology of liver tumours.

With regards to diagnosis, two chapters are specifically devoted to α_1 -feto protein and the usefulness of radioimmunoassay for measuring this tumour marker. Other diagnostic techniques such as isotopic liver scanning and arteriography are not covered.

Treatment of primary liver cancer is not dealt with in this book. The probable reason for this is that most of the experience in this field is very recent, and the organising committee probably quite rightly felt that the results of therapy available at the time of the meeting were unlikely to stand the test of time.

This book therefore lives up to the high standard of publications summarising the earlier Falk Foundation Symposia. I suspect that it will be more useful to departmental libraries than to the individual reader.

D. B. A. SILK

Nerves and the Gut Edited by Frank T. Brooks and Patricia W. Evers. (Pp. 541. Illustrated. \$30.) Charles B. Slack: Thorofare N.J. 1979.

This work consists of the proceedings of an international symposium organised by the Philadelphia Gastroenterology Group with the object of presenting an interdisciplinary view of the most recent knowledge concerning nerves and the gut. The symposium attracted research workers of international repute who presented papers on the neural control of secretory and motor activity of the gut together with considerable discussion concerning the activity of afferent nerves. Papers by several authors reflect an increasing interest in the influence of various higher centres in the central nervous system on gastroenterological function.

Comprehensive reviews of evidence obtained from animal experiments are included among the papers and will be found helpful by anyone engaged in basic research on the gastrointestinal tract. The reporting of any symposium of this type must inevitably give an incomplete picture of such a vast subject. Recent developments tend to overshadow historical contributions. Authors present their own particular interests which must of necessity be but a small part of the field and be subject to personal bias. This is, however, in itself stimulating to those doing active research in the subject and makes quite lively reading. The personal bias of contributors is offset to some degree by the reporting of discussion in some detail. As is almost universal at gastroenterological meetings, the number of papers diminishes as one descends the intestinal tract!

Healthy scepticism is shown in the interpretation of some pharmacological experiments, as for instance on page 14, where reference is made to the use of large doses of drugs such as isoprenaline to cause changes in secretion of saliva. The authors of the particular article are dubious as to whether such changes wholly reflect normal physiological processes. Similar cautionary remarks are often applicable to the increasing number of naturally occurring pharmacologically active substances believed to modify gut motility.

Prophecy regarding the future of research in any subject is an unprofitable exercise but, in the last chapter, Stewart Wolf does direct the reader into fields where our knowledge is scanty indeed. He reminds us that Sherrington chose the somatic nervous system for his life's work, as he said that there were fewer contingencies between input and output in the

somatic than in the autonomic system. Little enough is known about the intrinsic activity of the autonomic system; Dr Wolf points to the enormously increased complexity of the situation when the interaction between it and the brain is taken into account. He illustrates this with an example of the capriciousness of the placebo effect in tests on medical students and also from observations on his well-known gastric fistulous subject, Tom.

This is a stimulating and challenging book to all those who are specialists working in this field.

A. PARKS