Books

Any criticism is minor and is aimed at the style of English—for example, 'small magnification of a liver', spelling—'primary biliary cirrhosis', or at the absence of bold type in the index to indicate the major text reference. Perhaps the authors are carried away by their approach and indulge in sign-splitting. Thus eight patterns of fibrosis and 11 types of liver cell necrosis are described. However, all pretenders to the kingdom of hepatopathology should be aware of this book which is a welcome breath of fresh air among the current fug of atlases.

ASHLEY B PRICE


This is a practical and imaginative edition of Clinics in gastroenterology that bears a strong editorial stamp of authority. The guest editors have managed to persuade a number of eminent contributors to tackle the heterogeneous subject of postsurgical syndromes in a logical and orderly way. The resulting edition is scholarly and each chapter will be used, deservedly, as a standard work of reference.

The very scholarly nature of the contributions is sometimes a weakness when one tries to use the book as a guide to the assessment and management of a specific postsurgical problem. The emphasis of the book is so much on analyses and classification that often there does not seem to be enough room for advice on management. The editors set the pattern in their chapter on the oesophagus. They produce a brilliant and logical classification of the postsurgical disorders with five ingenious flow charts. It is, however, rather difficult to extract from the chapter practical advice about management.

At first sight, it might seem that there might be tedious repetition when three authors in successive chapters consider malnutrition, dumping, and anaemia after operations on the stomach. However, all the accounts bear reading and are complementary.

An authoritative chapter written from Hamburg on papillotomy and bilio-colicigastic anastomosis is both logically precise and of great value. It is worth buying the book for this chapter alone. In another excellent chapter on postsphincterotomy problems written from Basel with great authority, the authors conclude with very strong advice to all aspiring cholecystectomists: during the operation all surgeons should perform pressure controlled cholangiography, pressure and flow measurements and the CCK test. This advice is clearly impractical for most surgeons throughout the world because of lack of facilities: furthermore, neither the authors nor anyone else has shown conclusively that, after such an elaborate regime, the incidence of post-cholecystectomy syndromes is significantly less than if none of these procedures was used.

ALEXANDER-WILLIAMS


This is the first book, published in German, in a series entitled Interdisciplinary gastroenterology. Its origins, according to a note on the flyleaf, lie in a sponsored workshop. The book is edited jointly by a physician and a surgeon, and there are 32 contributors, mainly drawn from Austria, West Germany, and Switzerland. The editors believe that peptic ulceration is an ideal subject for an interdisciplinary approach, more particularly as there are relatively few clear-cut indications for either medical or surgical treatment. The book is divided into three parts. The first concentrates on definitions, epidemiological observations, and pathological considerations, while the second part concerns itself with therapeutic principles. In the third major section the clinical application of these principles—that is, therapeutic indications—are discussed.

The concepts on which the book is based are unassailable, and the contributors have been successful in achieving the aims set by the editors. Every contribution fits well into the pattern. The emphasis is on facts throughout, and there are comprehensive lists of references. Particular stress is laid on controlled trials. The conclusions are well balanced and carefully argued. The volume comes in the form of a small book with soft covers. The layout is pleasing to the eye, with clear print and good diagrams. There is an enormous amount of information in these 400 small pages.

Every section is itself excellent value, but the book is not easy to read as a whole as the style is strikingly different from what one normally expects to find in an English or American book on a medical subject. This matters little. Despite the publisher’s blurb, it is not a book that can be recommended as offering valuable help in general practice. It is, however, a mine of well-ordered information for physicians and surgeons with a major interest in peptic ulcer disease, and contains in addition much useful practical advice. An English-language version would be welcome.

K SCHILLER


The past few decades have seen tremendous activity in the application of scientific methods to the study of the alimentary tract and the liver. These researches have often been guided as much by advances in technology as by the need to solve urgent clinical problems. Consequently there is often a certain dislocation between the ‘scientific basis’ and clinical gastroenterology. This is perhaps particularly exemplified by the isolation of new gastrointestinal hormones ‘searching’ for a role in health and disease, and, on the other hand, by our lack of understanding of the aetiology of any of the major gastrointestinal diseases in the face of rapid developments in alimentary physiology.

Professor Duthie and Dr Wormsley have assembled experts from Australia, Belgium, Poland, and the USA as well as Britain to write a series of 19 impressive essays. Gastrointestinal and vascular physiologists, biochemists, endocrinologists, an immunologist, a cytologist, physicians, and surgeons have written chapters varying from discussions of basic functions in which research methodology has been critically reviewed to the use of physiological tests for clinical assessment. The book is well illustrated and indexed, and the editors have kept overlap of subject matter to a minimum. Some of the chapters, such as the first on cell population kinetics, are masterly reviews of methodology which will help the reader to understand the literature and evaluate it critically. With one or two chapters, one inevitably has the feeling of seeing an attempted still-shot of a rapidly moving subject.

After an initial section entitled ‘Basic principles’ there follows one on ‘Secretion’, which does not cover the small intestine. This is dealt with under ‘Absorption’ where the simultaneous processes of secretion, digestion, and absorption are covered together. The book ends with