petitive in their recommendations as to the non-operative management of biliary tract stones by extraction through the T tube tract or by duodenoscopic sphincterotomy, respectively. Both contributions are nicely written and illustrated, with Peter Cotton perhaps winning on points by the inclusion of colour photographs. As always, one is left feeling that perhaps it is the enthusiasm and skill of the doctor rather than the technique itself that is important in determining the outcome of treatment.

The subjects covered by Bill Go and David Dreiling and Philip Wolfson (oncofetal antigens and the secretin test, respectively) appear perhaps a little dated, but, as both chapters are written with the style which would be expected from such authorities, these also are good value.

Finally, there is an excellent chapter on current concepts of screening, diagnosis, and risk of colonic cancer by Winawer, Poleski, and Sherlock.

Dr. Berk has maintained the high standard set by the first volume of his 'Developments in Digestive Diseases'. This book can be recommended to all gastroenterologists, and the series seems set to hold its own against the competition of the other gastroenterology reviews.

RICHARD F. HARVEY

Carcino-embryonic Proteins: Chemistry, Biology and Clinical Application (2 volumes) Edited by F G Lehmann. (Pp. (1) 557, (2) 932. Illustrated. (1) \$114.75. (2) \$114.75.) Elsevier/North Holland Biomedical Press: Amsterdam, Shannon, New York. 1979.

During the last 15 years, research workers and clinicians have become interested in the biology and clinical application of a range of oncofetal products. These two volumes provide a collection of up-to-date information arising from the 6th Meeting of the International Research Group for Carcino-embryonic Proteins held in Marburg in September 1978.

Both volumes are arranged in chapters covering carcinoembryonic antigen and other carcinoembryonic proteins, alpha-fetoprotein, isoferritins, placental proteins, isoenzymes, and hormones. Volume 1 consists of invited reviews and the more important original papers. Volume 2 comprises the remaining original papers covering a spectrum of interest from basic sciences to clinical applications.

Current research and opinion about the clinical usefulness of tumour markers will be of particular interest to the gastroenterologist. There are some useful

contributions about the biology and clinical applications of AFP in benign and malignant liver diseases. Several papers highlight the problems of specificity and sensitivity in the use of CEA in diagnosis. Its usefulness in post-operative monitoring, and some preliminary results of 'second look' operations undertaken because of rising CEA values, are discussed. The value of measuring more than one tumour marker is touched on. Several authors conclude that the interest in and potential application of tumour markers at present outstrip their proven clinical usefulness in some areas.

Volume 1 is a useful reference work for those interested in recent developments in oncofetal products, and both volumes provide detailed information for the research worker, and an excellent source of references to the literature. In spite of extensive selection and editing, there is inevitably some variability in the quality of contributions and, in view of the price, it is likely that copies will be purchased by libraries rather than individuals.

ALICE W BULLEN

Abdominal Pain By Donald J Currie. (Pp. 233. Illustrated. £11.95.) McGraw-Hill: Maidenhead. 1979.

Abdominal pain is one of the commonest reasons for which patients consult a gastroenterologist. Its investigation and management probably cause more difficulty than any other specific symptom. It was with pleasure therefore that I received this book, which seemed to offer help in a difficult area.

Regrettably, however, I have to report that this has not proved to be the case. The main problem seems to be that the author has failed to define for whom this book is written and what it is trying to do. My impression is that it has been written from the point of view of a junior medical student rather than that of an experienced clinician. If this is the case, then I feel that the book contains an excessive amount of detail and that the text is very repetitive. It is unfortunate that the author has chosen to follow very traditional lines in the layout of the book with chapters devoted to history taking, physical examination, anatomy, physiology, etc., rather than attempting to approach abdominal pain from a symptomatic point of view and an analysis of how one sorts out these symptoms. Because of this approach, the text is very discursive and repetitive and, unfortunately, there are few illustrations

present to break up the monotony of the written word. In discussing the causes of abdominal pain the author has decided to do this under 'organ headings' rather than under 'pain patterns'. The latter would, perhaps, have been more helpful to the student and practising clinician. At one point in the text mention is made of the value of 'probability analysis' in the diagnosis of abdominal pain. However, in spite of this, throughout the text the author repeats dogmatically features which such probability analysis has shown to be in error. The one redeeming feature is that there is a bibliography after every chapter which could be of considerable value for anyone interested in this topic.

In conclusion, therefore, I feel that I cannot recommend this book, except as an excellent source of references.

C W VENABLES

Surgical Sepsis Edited by C J L Strachan and R Wise. (Pp. 153. Graphs. £11.80, \$25.00). Academic Press Inc: London; Grune and Stratton: NY, 1979.

This book presents the proceedings of a symposium on surgical sepsis held in Birmingham in September 1978. The organisers were able to bring together a number of distinguished contributors all of whom have established a reputation in the field. None of the individual contributions can be faulted; all are based on careful documented observation and sound clinical experience, and the presentation is uniformly good. There are concise reviews of the basis of prophylaxis and treatment of infection, and a series of papers on systemic protection are devoted to common problems in gastrointestinal surgery.

While there is little to criticise in terms of content and presentation, it is difficult to recommend purchase of this volume. The book is one of a number of recent reviews, small textbooks, and published conference proceedings which address the problem of surgical infection, and, as such, has no particular merit. The clinician seeking clear guidelines will be disappointed, in that the participants had no common view on the prevention and treatment of sepsis in gastrointestinal surgery, their views reflecting the spectrum of informed opinion in the current surgical literature. Clinicians with a particular interest in surgical sepsis may enjoy a browse through this volume, but one suspects that they will already be aware of the material presented.

D C CARTER