Each section of the book is followed by a general discussion, often the most probing part of the proceedings. For while the papers naturally emphasise the exciting explosion of knowledge in this field over the past few years, the discussions reveal how little we still know about the natural history, epidemiology, and pathophysiology of this common disease.

Should we strive to diagnose a condition which often remains asymptomatic—or does it? Should we always advise treatment? Can we prevent gallstones recurring after medical or surgical treatment? Or are all duct stones in patients after cholecystectomy retained stones? These questions are all discussed if not answered. So in spite of occasional imbalance in the discussion, inevitable in symposium proceedings, the book does tackle real issues, and would be an interesting addition to any library.

T S LOW BEER


This is a most useful little book—concise, informative, and stimulating, giving a remarkably clear picture of epidemiological factors associated with alimentary cancer, peptic ulcer, ulcerative colitis, Crohn’s disease, diverticular disease, appendicitis, gallstones, and pancreatitis.

Environmental factors associated with daily living are likely to make a major contribution to the cause of these diseases and all the new facts are emerging. This book provides a comprehensive review of present-day knowledge. Associated or predisposing diseases, time trends, occupational, social, and dietary factors are all brought together and assessed.

The uniform method of presentation and the clear-cut critical comments make it remarkably easy to read. This is a book which will stimulate both the teacher and the students.

F AVERY JONES


While the whole I found this to be a good book. As far as I know it is the first occasion on which the importance of the endoscopy assistant has been acknowledged in a separate publication. The book provides an outline of the assistant’s expected role and duties. This, I feel, is important and provides a good basic text for nurses or technicians training to work in the endoscopy area.

There is one photograph and one paragraph (p. 60) which should never have been included and this refers to the blindfolded patient. To me, the eyes have it. During the procedure of endoscopy the eyes are the most important non-verbal channel of communication between the patient on the one hand and the doctor and the nurse on the other and are used to encourage and reassure the patient and to monitor discomfort, pain, or any change in the patient’s condition. Blindfolding the patient is not humane and is a very backward step in a very forward-looking investigation.

PAULINE ELDERTON


The book is one of the Annual Research Reviews on Psychology and Psychiatry; it is well written and incorporates much of the important literature in the field. In 1976 there were a number of conferences and reports on obesity research and this book draws heavily on these sources. The first part of the book covers the research on feeding and appetite control published in 1975, 1976, and the early part of 1977. If the book had appeared in late 1977 or in early or mid 1978, then it would have been a major contribution to the literature on appetite and food intake. However, appearing in late 1979, it is out of date, and several key works have been published which the book does not discuss, including Bray, G (ed), Recent Advances in Obesity Research: II, Newman, 1978; Lytle, L, Control of eating behaviour, in Nutrition and the Brain, Vol 2 (eds Wurtman, R, and Wurtman, J) Raven, 1977; and Powley, T, The ventromedial hypothalamic syndrome, satiety, and a cephalic phase hypothesis, Psychological Review, 84, 89–126, 1977. The chapters on feeding regulation would have been better published a year or two earlier as a review in a journal with an emphasis on the way new work is showing that the concept of appetite and satiety centres in the hypothalamus is untenable.

The second part of the book deals with the treatment of obesity and is much less satisfactory. The protein-sparing fast system, involving the use of relatively small protein intakes, is dealt with far too briefly and has failed to include a cautionary note after the series of deaths in the United States. Surgical treatment is dealt with only in terms of the increasingly outmoded jejunoileal bypass but room is given to the observation that its main effect is to reduce food intake rather than to induce malabsorption. Behavioural and psychological therapy is considered without any details of technique and the review has missed the latest evidence that the group-based behavioural modification programmes fail to achieve any greater long-term success than the dismal results from other medical treatments.

This type of book is fine for beginners but only if published rapidly. Let us hope that Volume 2 is either up to date or critically analytical—ideally both.

W P T JAMES


This is the third in a series of surgical manuals designed to present current operative techniques and to explore various aspects of diagnosis and treatment”—the General Editor’s description. The book is presented in a large format with clear print and an abundance of illustrations, some black-and-white but the majority coloured. There is an excellent coverage of operations on the gallbladder and bile ducts in the first section, and on the pancreas, the latter being considered only as an exocrine organ, in the second section.

The general arrangement is for introductory sections on anatomy and physiology to be succeeded by descriptions of congenital anomalies, inflammatory diseases, neoplasms (and cysts), trauma, and operative techniques. Most subjects are treated in considerable detail—for example, annular pancreas receives six pages including seven illustrations and eight good references are given to the literature on this subject. The drawings of operative techniques are explicit, sufficiently abstract to emphasise the important points yet sufficiently realistic to carry conviction.

There is of course a price to be paid for all this—a pretty steep one! I am delighted to have this book on my shelves, but would not have bought it. I cannot help feeling that it would have been possible to present the material less lavishly and
more cheaply without detracting from its usefulness, but recognise that many factors enter into decisions about expense versus quality.

MICHAEL HOBSELY


This is the seventh book in the series, each of which is the written version of an annual symposium in gastroenterology that is held in Oxford and planned and presided over by Dr Sidney Truelove with his characteristic blend of dry wit and erudition.

This volume consists of nine chapters reviewing various aspects of peptic ulcer disease and nine relating immunology to the alimentary tract, both served up with six contributions on metabolism and recent advances in cellular chemistry.

It must be admitted that the clinical chapters—inevitably superficial, as that happens to be the state of the art—mostly contain very familiar statements but they are, after all, reviews in the main. That on the epidemiology of peptic ulcer is, however, the best short account of the subject I have read, and the chapters on the relation between gastric blood flow and acid secretary capacity and the well-illustrated account of the microcirculation of the stomach and duodenum are interesting and stimulating. The reviews of the pathogenesis of duodenal ulcer and of hormonal influences are pedestrian, and an otherwise pithy evaluation of ulcer surgery was somewhat marred by the inappropriate certainty of the view that the failure of gastric ulcer to heal in six weeks represents a sine qua non for surgery. Curiously, the author of the section on the long-term course of ulcer hedges his bets by making a similar statement in the middle of his contribution and retracting it in the final paragraph.

Of course for most audiences a general account of immunology must precede more specialised statements and consequently one sees charts and diagrams, some of which are renewals of old acquaintances, but, in spite of that, this section splendidly maintains the relationship to the alimentary tract and is as readable as it is informative.

The point of publishing symposia proceedings is often questioned, and most often rightly so, but in books such as this the justification lies in the simple fact that the reader is obtaining for £18.50 the information that would have cost him very much more to obtain at the source, with the advantage of distillation and editing. As it is available within 12 months of the proceedings, it is as up to date as matters.

Viewed this way this book represents value for money and with only four undistinguished chapters out of 24 is very good reading and will be a useful reference source for the next few years.

It can be recommended to all those who are interested in updates in gastroenterology, whatever their branch of our discipline, but I suspect that if the price could have been halved it would have more than doubled the number of purchasers.

W SIRCUS


The first third of this book is entitled 'General aspects', the remaining two-thirds being organ-based.

I suspect that the editors found difficulty in selecting a general heading for the first part, which is a mixture including basic science, epidemiology, and descriptions of practical procedures such as gastrointestinal endoscopy. This is a very useful section, covering some topics in a way seldom found in other books.

The second, organ-based, portion of the book is partly devoted to scientific foundations of gastroenterology and partly clinically orientated, with, for example, sections on the evaluation of surgical procedures. Thus the title of the book could be thought to be more restricted than its content, which strays more towards the clinical than, for example, Scientific Basis of Gastroenterology by Duthie and Wormsley.

This is clearly not a book which should be read from cover to cover. As a volume to dip into for information or understanding it is, in general, most rewarding: some sections are excellent, such as that on water and salt metabolism in the small intestine; others are less satisfactory—for example, the concepts involved in computerised tomographic scanning might be easier to understand if illustrated. However, any reviewer will be dissatisfied with some things in a book of this size.

Overall, a reader of this book will stand a very good chance of finding a helpful discussion and a balanced view of a problem in gastroenterology. Inevitably such a big book with so many authors represents a triumph of diplomacy by the editors and thus is already out of date. Nevertheless, I am pleased to have it on my shelves and it will be well used.

M S LOSOWSKY


This book has two parts. The first includes useful chapters on biopsy handling, normal appearances, and the assessment of abnormalities. In the second there are good descriptions of the findings in the mucosal biopsies from patients with the conditions, common and uncommon, which give rise to these abnormalities.

The emphasis is on histology, but transmission and scanning electron microscopy are used where appropriate, especially in the first part. The illustrations are profuse, clear, and relevant. The references follow each chapter and the four-page index covers all the essentials.

The sketchiness of the history is not important, but it is more surprising that such scant attention is paid to measurements of enterocyte height in coeliac disease, a remarkably reproducible feature which is particularly useful in assessing early response to gluten withdrawal or challenge. This relative omission limits the value of the brief section on normal epithelial morphology and highlights the more important absence of any detailed account of mucosal response to treatment and gluten challenge in coeliac disease, a condition still ill-defined in terms of response to treatment.

Nevertheless, this book is highly readable and has several special merits such as the sections on radiation enteritis and on duodenitis, and a fine sense of proportion in dealing with a wide variety of conditions. This produces a balanced presentation of the mucosal lesions by which any reader of Gut is likely to find his biopsy capsule. The book will be at least as valuable to the clinician as to the histopathologist.

J S STEWART