

Books

Clinics in Gastroenterology—Alcohol and the GI Tract Edited by Carroll M Leevy. (Pp. 261–502. Illustrated. £9.75.) W B Saunders, 1 St. Anne's Road, Eastbourne, East Sussex. 1981.

In view of the steady increase of alcoholism in most western countries in recent years, it seems appropriate at this time that an entire issue of *Clinics in Gastroenterology* should be devoted to alcohol and the gastrointestinal tract. Dr Leevy, editor of this volume, has chosen subjects for individual chapters with skill and flair, reflecting the range of interest and developments in research in all aspects of the effects of chronic alcohol ingestion on gastrointestinal, hepatic, and pancreatic function.

Perhaps the most interesting sections of the book are the chapters dealing with the effects of alcohol on intestinal absorptive function and the utilisation of nutrients, cell replication, and the metabolic effects of ethanol on the liver and alimentary tract, and the important developments suggesting that host immunity and genetic background may be factors in the pathogenesis of alcohol-associated disease.

The book is well rounded by a series of chapters on the clinical aspects of alcohol-related gastrointestinal disease with sections on oesophageal lesions, gastritis, pancreatitis, hepatitis, cirrhosis, primary hepatic cancer, and cancer of the pancreas. A final brief chapter on alcohol and drug interactions is also a valuable contribution to the subject.

In keeping with the *Clinics in Gastroenterology* series as a whole, this volume is characterised by good presentation and drawings, although the format of individual chapters perhaps varies to a greater extent in this volume than in some of its predecessors.

The book is to be recommended for clinicians and basic research workers in the field. For those interested in alcohol Dr Leevy's book offers not only the combination of basic physiological and metabolic data but also valuable and practical clinical information.

R I RUSSELL

Current Topics in Nutrition and Disease. Volume 4: Nutritional Pharmacology Edited by G A Spiller. (Pp. 259. Illustrated. £27.30, DM120.00.) Alan R Liss: New York. 1981.

The importance of a patient's nutritional status and the implications for the clinician have been major topics in the last decade. *Nutritional Pharmacology* is the fourth in a series entitled *Current Topics in*

Nutrition and Disease, previous volumes examining bone loss, chromium in nutrition and disease, and nutrition for the elderly. This book differs from most current textbooks on nutrition as it looks at the use of certain nutrients and other components of diet as pharmacological tools. Ten contributors discuss such diverse topics as the use of increased lethicin and choline intake to improve cholinergic transmission and the possible role of retinoids in carcinogenesis. Each topic discussed is still in a formative stage and precise clinical benefits remain tantalisingly close but elusive. Perhaps the use of branch chain amino acid solutions is closest to therapeutic use, yet their precise advantage over a broad spectrum amino acid solution after injury has yet to be conclusively shown. Similarly, in chronic liver disease, although improving mental state, they have not yet realised their potential in reducing mortality. A major disappointment is that the interrelationship between nutrition and drugs is not discussed, yet here is a neglected topic of major importance where the action of a drug may be greatly altered.

This book provides a series of excellent articles with a comprehensive set of references. Its strength is that of a reference book, the content being a series of sign posts for the future. The price, however, probably restricts it to the library bookshelf.

A W GOODE

Crohn's Disease of the Gastrointestinal Tract By Howard Schachter and Joseph B Kirsner. (Pp. 182. Illustrated. £15.50.) Wiley: Chichester. 1980.

The amount of information about Crohn's disease continues to grow steadily in many fields, including epidemiology, pathogenesis, clinical diagnosis, and therapy. This book provides a useful catalogue of data for each of these major fields. When picking up a book on Crohn's disease there is a temptation to feel that it will 'reveal all', but there are no major discoveries influencing medical practice.

It begins in an interesting way by republishing the original description of this disease written by Crohn, Ginzburg, and Oppenheimer which was first published in 1932. The radiological and pathological manifestations of Crohn's disease are well described. The authors also emphasise the problems in differentiating this disease from other inflammatory conditions of the gastrointestinal tract, in particular, Crohn's disease. The illustrations are of good quality and show abnormalities clearly. The authors state that the overall clinical usefulness of the double contrast examination requires further evaluation but such examinations are now accepted practice in most departments of diagnostic radiology.