

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.

The section on aetiology and pathogenesis gives a great deal of information with lists of possibilities but without much direction or emphasis on important aspects. Although it is a useful collection of information, the book tends to present information as a collection of facts without giving an opinion about areas which will be most profitable for future investigation. A few signposts here and there would perhaps provide encouragement for the weary traveller with a commitment to this disease.

JOHN RHODES

Clinical Trials By Daniel Schwartz, Robert Flamant, and Joseph Lellouch, translated by M J R Healy. (Pp. 281. £15.00, \$34.50.) Academic Press: London.

Deciding upon the relative merits of different treatments requires a clear-headed approach to trial design, dogged persistence in adhering to the protocol, and disinterested analysis of the results. The British are inclined to see themselves as the only begetters of the controlled trial but this book shows that the philosophical and practical problems are well appreciated by others.

The book is not so much an instruction manual for the trial designer as a series of linked essays upon the problems and, as such, is for casual reading rather than for use as a reference work. The book has four sections, on the aims and principles of the controlled trial, preparation required before embarking on the exercise, a short section—only four pages—on conduct of the trial, and a concluding section devoted to analysis and interpretation.

The clinician who wishes to think about the problems of conducting controlled trials will find much of interest and should profit from his reading. This, despite the fact that a certain amount of mathematical detail and justification is included—perhaps more than is needed in a book which the authors consider to be a stimulant for thought rather than a working tool. It should be emphasised, however, that the thoughts are not only philosophical but also very practical. The authors repeatedly emphasise the distinction between explanatory and pragmatic trials—that is, aimed at obtaining information at a biological level and at a practical working clinical level. In doing so, they make a useful contribution to a difference which may have important effects upon trial design.

The general reader without complex statistical knowledge will still find much of interest in this book which has been ably and unobtrusively translated, but he probably ought to wish it on his medical library rather than buy it himself.

M J S LANGMAN

Primer of Gastrointestinal Fiberoptic Endoscopy C Sugawa and B M Schuman. (Pp. 165. Illustrated. £22.50 app.) Little, Brown: Boston, Mass. 1981

This interesting and very readable book has been produced by two American authors, both recognised as experts in the area of gastrointestinal endoscopy.

It is essentially an introduction to endoscopy containing many useful hints on technique, as well as careful discussion of the value and clinical context of these techniques. There are 10 chapters, beginning with the history of fiberoptic endoscopy, the physics involved, and a detailed description of instruments available. The technique of, and the findings at, upper gastrointestinal endoscopy are described and illustrated in colour. ERCP and colonoscopy are dealt with at some length, and there are four short chapters on upper gastrointestinal haemorrhages, therapeutic endoscopy, paediatric endoscopy, and other techniques—for example, choledochoscopy.

Too little attention is given, I believe, to the care and sterilisation of endoscopic instruments. This is disappointing, as, to the physician endeavouring to set up an endoscopic service, the dangers both clinical and legal of using infected instruments need to be stressed. Less than a page of text is devoted to cleaning and disinfection of endoscopes, and the novice could be forgiven for believing this to be not a very important topic. One other minor point concerns the use of radiographs to illustrate techniques in upper gastrointestinal endoscopy, such as the 'J manoeuvre'. Radiology is not used in this context, and the use of visual aids such as transparent gastric models would have been more appropriate.

The deficiencies do not detract from the overall clarity and conciseness of the book, and I am sure that it will be enjoyed by anyone who reads it. I do not recommend it, however, to the beginner. As a practical manual, I found it not sufficiently practical or technically helpful, and in this context there is a better and cheaper alternative available.

A G VALLON

The Gastroenterology Assistant By Melvin Schapiro and Joel Kuritsky. (Pp. 113. Illustrated. Price not quoted.) Valley Presbyterian Hospital, 15107 Van Owen Street, Van Nuys, California, USA.

This is the second edition of a detailed loose-leaf manual for the true gastroenterological assistant, rather than for the more usual British nurse in units