

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