

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

in the United Kingdom. It details all the many possible procedures that might be done in gastroenterology units, and describes them all in impressively minute detail. The information and instructions are clearly tabulated. Comments such as 'check to see that the physician's toe lines up with the appropriate foot pedal', and photographs of the efficient looking assistants (always female, with nail varnish) and happy patients, may make the British gastroenterologist attempt the Vq examination. The book is not written for the doctor, but nevertheless contains useful tips, particularly about electrosurgery, although the picture of a large, raw steak on which to test the papillotome before use is almost shocking.

Some of the procedures described are not widely done by gastroenterologists in Great Britain, including the notorious string test for gastrointestinal bleeding, percutaneous cholangiography, oesophageal infusion test, saline load test for gastric retention, and the enterotest, which is a string test for intestinal parasites. Percutaneous liver biopsy might be included in the next edition, as it is becoming an outpatient procedure in the United States. Two criticisms are that complications of the more invasive tests are not properly described, for even the assistant should know what may go wrong after the patient has left the unit, and that the page numbers, which are centrally placed at the bottom of the pages, are frequently obliterated by the holes of the loose-leaf binding.

However, it is full of obvious and not-so-obvious information that is usefully collected together, and it will therefore be useful to gastroenterology units in Great Britain if it is read selectively. There is even an interesting appendix with sample flow charts and forms. I think it is worth the money.

R D H THOMPSON

**Drug Reactions and the Liver** Edited by Michael Davis, J Michael Tredger and Roger Williams. (Pp. 364. Illustrated. £20.) Pitman Books: London. 1981.

The emphasis of this book is on liver damage due to drugs but the content is by no means confined to this, and the title may not convey that the picture is painted on a broad canvas. Although the book is derived from papers presented at a symposium held over a year ago, the content is as up to date as necessary for those who will wish to use it. In the nature of conference proceedings, this is not a single cohesive story. There is a mixture of material

applicable to the practising physician and of material which is more directly of interest to those conducting research. There is repetition, there are differing views, and there are transcripts of discussions. All this makes for a colourful presentation but not for a stylised, easy to follow, formal picture. A Matisse rather than a Lorraine.

This book is arranged in sections, although I suspect the editors had difficulty in deciding on the organisation. The first part, headed 'Critical viewpoints', is broadly based, encompassing the reporting of drug reactions and mechanisms of drug hepatotoxicity. The second part is headed 'Patterns and variability of response'. The chapter on 'Spectrum of clinical lesions', by Zimmerman, is an excellent presentation of drug hepatotoxicity with lists and classifications of significance and usefulness.

There are parts devoted to major problems in the field of liver damage due to drugs. These include a comprehensive collection of articles on paracetamol-induced liver damage showing the extent of our knowledge and a few articles on isoniazid-induced liver damage showing the extent of our ignorance. There follows a major section on halothane-induced liver damage giving an excellent summary of the situation in a balanced way, including views from anaesthetists and from the drug industry. This clearly proclaims that the physician's viewpoint gives a very distorted picture by which to judge the use of this anaesthetic. The description of liver tumours produced by contraceptive and androgenic steroids is timely and helpful.

This book contains most of what is needed by the physician for his understanding of the present knowledge in drug reactions and the liver. It contains much more besides. It is not, however, an undemanding systematised presentation. The symposium was as much concerned with problems as with answers, which is the strength of this book and indicates the type of reader who would benefit most from it.

M S LOSOWSKY

**Practical Management of Liver Disease** By David R Triger. (Pp. 249. Illustrated. £9.50.) Blackwell Scientific Publications: Oxford. 1981.

This book is not only a manageable size but eminently readable. Its price is not prohibitive but would be more attractive if a paperback version were available. This would be more likely to reach those to whom this book is aimed—namely, the non-specialist who wishes to keep abreast of an