Books

Clinical Surgery International vol. 2, Nutrition and the surgical patient Edited by Graham L Hill. (Pp. 323. Illustrated. £12.00.) Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone. 1981.

With the welter of books on nutritional aspects of postoperative care, one might well ask why we should have a further book setting out the nutritional needs of the surgical patient. The authors are familiar and some of the titles remind one of the care needed to avoid the use of word-processing in the preliminaries, if not in the paragraphs, of the text! With this jaundiced view of the prospects I was pleasantly surprised to find that there was less overlap than expected in the chapters.

The first chapter on nutritional disorders could, however, be seen only in the context of its being a general introduction.

A chapter by Hesson reviews the claims of the high prevalence of malnutrition and begins to put the claims in perspective by noting the extraordinary variation in the criteria used for assessing malnutrition. This problem is dealt with in more detail by Bistran, who still believes that allergen skin testing is useful and anergy an important risk factor; he sets out a system for classifying the degree of malnutrition based on urinary urea Nm immunocompetence and anthropometry – these determine whether patients need just fluid and electrolytes or total nutrition. More cautious discussions of the same topic are by Johnston, Collins and Alley, and here there is far too much overlap. Enteral feeding is discussed more helpfully and details of doing a jejunostomy for feeding are included before Jeejeebhoy presents an unusually pithy review of intravenous feeding and again denies the primary importance of malnutrition in causing the anergy found in his patients. We are then treated to chapters on intravenous catheters with almost identical diagrams by different authors showing tunnelled catheters fixed in subclavian veins. These technical aspects have received too little attention in the past but one wishes that the experience of the various authors had been succinctly summarised by the editor, or even by Jeejeebhoy. Trace elements and their importance are well reviewed and then follow chapters on the feeding of disorders that present particular problems – for example, hepatitis and renal failure, and burns.

This book is indeed useful for newcomers but can we now have a three-year moratorium on the subject while somebody actually does some new work?

PHILIP JAMES

Clinical investigation of gastrointestinal function Malcolm C Bateson and Ian A D Bouchier. (Pp. 232. Illustrated. £7.50). Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications. 1981.

Twelve years have elapsed since the first edition of this book, which describes the techniques used in the practice of gastroenterology. During this time, procedures have multiplied, and, in particular, there has been the remarkable expansion in endoscopy, radiology, and ultrasonography. The place of liver biopsy has been clarified, and new needles have become available.

These are all described in the present volume, and, despite the advances, the authors have managed to keep it to a reasonable (pocket book) size by excluding all outmoded methods. The book therefore keeps its place as a reliable practical treatise which junior staff and general physicians should keep at hand when faced with the performance of a gastrointestinal procedure. Each technique is clearly described in detail, and there are well-chosen references for further reading.

The price is reasonable, and the book should be in every hospital library and on every ward where patients with gastroenterological disorders are being investigated and treated.

SHEILA SHERLOCK

News

Basle Liver Week 1982

Basle Liver Week 1982 will take place from 12–18 October, under the presidency of Dr Hans Popper, and will include meetings on bile acids and cholesterol in health and disease, structural carbohydrates in the liver, liver in metabolic diseases, and histopathology of the liver. Details from Falk Foundation, Habsburgerstrasse 81, D-7800 Freiburg/Br., West Germany.

Fourth Glaxo/RPMS Symposium

The fourth in the series of Symposia in Basic Science in Gastroenterology, organised by J M Polak, S R Bloom, M Daly and N A Wright on 'Gut hormones in disease', will be held at the Hammersmith Hospital on 21 September 1982. Details from Dr M J Daly, Glaxo Group Research Ltd, Ware, Herts SG12 0DJ.