Books


The great strength of this book is that it comes from a single author. Because of this it can give clear advice and can be frank about gaps in our knowledge—for example, 'The treatment of Crohn's disease has yet to be established'.

There is wide coverage including a few well chosen words about even small print subjects. Line drawings are used instead of radiographic plates which proves successful and is preferable to written descriptions of radiographic findings. There is very brief description of surgical topics such as appendicitis, hernia, and intestinal obstruction. I wonder if this is necessary: although physicians need to know this much about surgical conditions it can be assumed that the basics must have been acquired from experience along the way.

Extensive use is made of tables, which is a considerable strength of the book. In places, however, the text supporting a table is remote from it and insufficient to allow reasonable understanding (the Tables on p. 224).

On the back cover we are told that this text has proved of value to senior clinical undergraduates and to postgraduates working for higher degrees. I think it is more than adequate for the former and certainly a good basis, but not adequate in itself, for the latter.

All in all this is clear, sensible, and adequate as a brief description of gastroenterology and makes a worthy addition to this series of concise medical textbooks.

M S LOSOWSKY


This anthology of 15 monographs covering selected aspects of gastrointestinal cancer is provided by a distinguished international panel of authors. There are a limited number of illustrations but this is well compensated by the attractive presentation and the clarity of the text. Another strong feature is the extensive bibliography (about 1600 references).

The editors have chosen to be topical rather than comprehensive. The first three chapters deal with subjects common to several gut malignancies: abnormal epithelial cytokinetics, genetic susceptibility, and the systemic manifestations of disease. Thereafter the main emphasis lies in the epidemiology, pathogenesis, and early detection of cancers arising within the alimentary canal. A few examples may demonstrate the range of subjects covered.

The problem of stump cancer after partial gastrectomy (but not vagotomy) is reviewed by Klaus Dahm of Hamburg. Logically, resection of the antrum, as practised for peptic ulcer disease, might be expected to protect against gastric carcinoma by removing a common site of origin for such tumours. To the contrary, the incidence of cancer may reach 20% at 20 years, especially after Polya (Billroth II) gastrectomy.

Seibi Kobayashi reviews the Japanese experience of early gastric cancer—that is, lesions confined to the mucosa or submucosa irrespective of nodal involvement. Even 'microcarcinoma' (<1 cm) can metastasise. In 1975 alone three million Japanese underwent mass screening with double-contrast radiography. For the 3000 'positive' cases (0.1%), a five-year survival rate of double the normal (27%) can be anticipated.

In another entertaining if mildly provocative chapter C B Williams (London) defines the diagnostic and therapeutic roles of colonoscopy. There are essays on some of the less frequent malignancies—colitis carcinoma, lymphoma, hepatoma, and the apudomas—and the book concludes with an evaluation of chemotherapy in gastric, pancreatic, and colorectal cancer. Altogether there is much to instruct those with an interest in this lethal clutch of diseases. I await with pleasure the promised sequel (?Gastrointestinal cancer II).

R C N WILLIAMSON


This is a small book; 225 pages 25 cm × 17 cm, but it contains over 400 colour illustrations and is well produced on high quality paper. It is thus very expensive.

The main body of the book is divided into three sections, covering the oesophagus, stomach, and duodenum. Each section starts with an account of the normal and abnormal histopathology of the
organ. There follows concise subsections on each condition encountered, each subsection slavishly following the same pattern — definition, incidence, pathogenesis, symptoms, diagnosis, endoscopic appearances, and references — and each lavishly illustrated in colour. Generally the material is arranged so that at any opening of the book, the text is on the left page and the illustrations on the right, six to a page. All this makes it a very predictable book and very easy to use for rapid reference, which is further facilitated by the detailed contents list stretching for six and a half pages at the beginning of the book.

The colour illustrations are mainly of a high standard, with very few poor reproductions. The text suffers a little from being a translation, and contains some unfamiliar terms such as 'oral' and 'aboral'. Unfortunately, for the English reader the majority of the references are in German. The final section on therapeutic endoscopy is disappointingly brief at only seven pages.

There is a remarkable amount of information packed into such a small book; one feels it should be four times as thick. Because of the style of layout it may make boring, repetitive reading after a while but it is an absolutely splendid reference book, which is precisely what it sets out to be. It will certainly be a most valuable addition to my library shelves.

BRIAN STERRY ASHBY


This nicely bound, rather expensive, publication is written by a number of endoscopy experts of international repute. The subject tackled is one of the growing points in endoscopy and in which important changes are taking place.

I found the book heavy going and in places difficult to understand. In certain sections the English is stilted to the European ear and certain of the chapters take too long to get to the point. Each chapter is preceded by the table of contents enabling the reader to quickly find the section he is interested in and this is of particular value in this book which is essentially a work of reference. The technical aspects of the book such as laser therapy and electrocoagulation are dealt with in considerable detail. The book discusses electrosurgical principles, electrocoagulation, sclerotherapy of oesophageal varices, laser photocoagulation (experimental and clinical), the use of topical therapy and bleeding from the large intestine. The final chapter contains some helpful clinical descriptions of colonic pathology.

This is a useful book for individuals who wish to understand the technical background of the apparatus used in the endoscopic control of gastrointestinal haemorrhage. It also contains the results of clinical trials using these endoscopic methods. It is difficult to recommend its purchase at the price asked, and in a field where techniques are changing rapidly and where new clinical information is becoming available all the time.

A T R AXON

News

Important editorial announcement

LETTER OF DECLARATION

In line with the practice of other scientific journals and because of the apparently increasing number of multiple publication of the same data in the scientific literature, Gut will from now on require a written declaration, signed by all the authors, stating that the paper has not been published, or submitted for publication elsewhere, and that all the authors agree to publication in Gut. Previous presentation of the data at scientific meetings with subsequent publication in abstract form must be declared as well.

The British Digestive Foundation

The following awards are announced:

The Smith Kline & French Fellowships
To Dr Kumaravelu Balasubramaniam working with Dr T C Northfield at the Norman Tanner Gastroenterology Unit, St James' Hospital, Balham, for research to determine the physiological role of lingual lipase in digestion in patients with pancreatic steatorrhoea due to adult cystic fibrosis.

The Amelie Waring Fellowships
The following fellowships, awarded last year for research into pancreatic disease, have been renewed for a further year: To Professor R M Case and Dr Joan Braganza (Manchester); Professor R C N Williamson (Bristol); Mr M J McMahon (Leeds).

BDF Grants

To Dr E S Debnam (Royal Free Hospital); Dr B Portmann (King's College Medical School); Professor J E Lennard-Jones (London).