Books

Biochemical aspects of human disease Edited by R S Elkeles and A S Tavill. (Pp. 729; illustrated; £49.50.) Oxford: Blackwell, 1983.

'Aspects of' in a book title is a useful piece of shorthand; it conveys the fact that a book is not comprehensive, but deals in detail with selective topics. One expects to find the phrase on the spine of books of modest size and price, and is a little surprised to find it on a 700 page book costing £49.50.

'Biochemical aspects of human disease' is intended to illustrate mechanisms of disease at a molecular level. Its most successful sections outline the normal biochemical and physiological pathways, followed by derangements in disease, in a fairly circumscribed area – for example, Thompson on lipids, lipoproteins, and hyperlipoproteinaemias, Elder on disorders of haem synthesis, and McKeran on biochemical diseases of the central nervous system. Other topics are so vast that the authors find themselves severely restricted to providing illustrative examples. For example, autoantibodies and disease (Feizi and Hadler) is fascinating on immunochemical aspects of red cell agglutinins, and leaves the reader sorry that the space left – for example, for a discussion of autoimmune thyroiditis – is so restricted. The wide scope of the book is illustrated by mentioning others of the 17 chapters – prostaglandins and human physiology, drug reactions and interactions, biochemical aspects of haematology, of the psychoses, and mechanisms of hormone action. Gastroenterologists will probably turn first to those on gastrointestinal disease (Turnberg) or liver disease (Tavill).

While so much is covered in great detail, there are a number of surprising omissions. In particular, in a book designed to interest the enquiring reader in biochemical advances over a wide area, a full section on molecular genetics, and the potential scope of recombinant DNA technology, is conspicuously absent; it gets a couple of pages under haematology. Nonetheless, for the enquiring clinician or basic scientist, this book contains a vast amount of interest and information.

H J F HODGSON

Alimentary tract radiology Vols 1 and 2. Edited by A R Margulis and H J Burhenne. (Pp. 2494; illustrated; £157.50.) St Louis: Mosby, 1983.

This impressive book covers the whole subject of alimentary tract radiology in two large and superbly

illustrated volumes. The scope of the work is enormous: it ranges from detailed and fundamental descriptions of the embryological, anatomical, physiological, and pathological features upon which radiological interpretation is based, to an assessment of the roles in gastrointestinal investigation of the very latest imaging modalities such as positron emission tomography and nuclear magnetic resonance. In between these two extremes lies a solid mass of accurate and relevant information about the application and interpretation of radiological procedures in the alimentary tract, including barium studies, ultrasonography, nuclear medicine, CT scanning, angiography, interventional radiology, and other techniques. A valuable feature is an 'overview' at the end of each major section of the book. This enables a leading authority in a particular field to give a comprehensive analysis of the way in which the many different imaging modalities can be integrated to yield the most efficient diagnostic and therapeutic pathways. It seems invidious to seek faults in such an outstanding work, and it is indeed difficult to find any serious criticisms. It came as a surprise, however, to find that the section entitled pharmacoradiology deals not, as one might expect, with the use of pharmacological agents in radiology, but with the radiological appearances of drug induced disease. Another minor criticism is the fact that there are a number of typographical and proof reading errors in the text, some of which allow the ambiguous or even misleading interpretation of certain passages. This kind of error is, however, inevitable in a book of this size, and should not detract from the overall impression of an outstanding practical and scientific work. The book is a reference library 'must' for all institutions which profess to run a modern gastroenterological service, and is obligatory reading for all individuals working in the field of alimentary tract investigation.

D J ALLISON

News

Société Nationale Française d'Endoscopie Digestive

The IV International Symposium on Digestive Endoscopy and the 7th European Course on Digestive Endoscopy will be held in Paris from 8–11 May 1984. Further information from the Scientific Secretariat, Dr C Liguory, 7 Av de Bretteville, 92200 Neuilly/Seine, France.