

Books

Principles of internal medicine Edited by R G Petersdorf, R D Adams, E Braunwald, K J Isselbacher, J B Martin, and J D Wilson. (Pp. 2212; illustrated; £50.25.) New York: McGraw Hill, 1983. When the 10th edition of a work of this size and scope appears less than 30 years after the first, it is testimony not only to the energy of the editorial team, but also to a readership which no longer depends upon the whims and fancies of reviewers. This book contains not only a complete account of diseases of the organ systems, but also almost all the pathophysiology and normal physiology that the undergraduate and postgraduate will need to know. It is pertinent to ask, in the columns of a subspecialty journal, whether it is useful to the subspecialist in his own field. For the gastroenterologist, the answer must be equivocal. Gastroenterology is divided between a 29 page section on 'Alterations in gastrointestinal function', containing chapters on topics such as 'dysphagia' and 'indigestion' and 168 pages on disorders of the alimentary tract, hepatobiliary system, and pancreas. This arrangement may help the student but is less useful to the practitioner. The detail is patchy; two pages on Z-E syndrome allows a very detailed description of a rare syndrome but four pages on duodenal ulcer does not allow the same depth to be applied to a common disease which has been widely studied. This book is not useful for gastroenterologists because of the chapters which deal with the digestive system; these chapters contain the knowledge which gastroenterologists should already know. On the other hand, it is an invaluable work for those who need to keep up with the broad front of internal medicine and this includes not only the vast majority of UK gastroenterologists who are also general physicians, but every physician in active practice. Senescence and obsolescence afflict most books and all physicians, but not this book.

DAVID WINGATE

Structural carbohydrates in the liver Edited by H Popper, W Reutter, F Gudat, and E Kottgen. (Pp. 701; illustrated; price not stated) Lancaster: MTP Press, 1983.

This volume reports the proceedings of a highly successful symposium held during the Basel Liver Week in October, 1982. It covers the biology of

complex carbohydrates, particularly those which are components of glycoproteins. It is an area of considerable complexity and one which is complicated by the technical difficulties of handling and analysing carbohydrate side chains. This book represents the 'state of the art' in 1982 and has contributions by most of the distinguished workers in the field. It deals with the synthesis and degradation of complex carbohydrates and their compounds, their role in intracellular transport and in determining cell surface characteristics, and discusses changes which have been reported in pathological conditions, particularly those involving the liver.

This symposium was the brain child of Hans Popper, now over 80 years old, who worked in this area as a young man. Those who wish to get the flavour of the book should read both his stimulating and thoughtful introduction, and his remarkable summary of the whole proceedings. His verbal presentation at the end of the meeting included newly prepared slides, of the last few talks, and was a tour de force even by Hans' own standards! The written version deserves to be read by everyone with an interest in the biology of the liver. No GI department should be without a copy of this book.

NEIL MCINTYRE

Extrahepatic biliary atresia Edited by F Daum and S E Fisher. (Pp. 280; illustrated; SFr.122) New York and Basel: Marcel Dekker Inc, 1983.

This is a compilation of papers presented at a meeting held in November 1981 covering all aspects of biliary atresia.

The book is divided into sections starting with aetiology, including morphology, and assessment, then the surgical treatment of extrahepatic biliary atresia is considered which is followed by a special section on liver transplantation. The last clinical section is on nutrition and medical treatment. Then follows a variety of papers on research possibly related to the condition. The chapters are written by workers with considerable experience in this rare disorder.

An important change in the course of this disease has followed the widespread use of porto-enterostomy which frequently results in good bile drainage. Unfortunately, virtually all patients eventually progress to cirrhosis, death usually occurring before puberty. It is likely that in the foreseeable future further management of the condition will involve planned liver transplantation at the most appropriate time. The results of liver grafting have improved in recent years and the outlook for children is better now than long term