
This North American book, predominantly written by authors from Pennsylvania, covers the full range of gastrointestinal disorders including liver and pancreatic disease, and particular benefit is claimed from a problem orientated approach which is designed to appeal to the practising physician.

The virtues are apparent in many of the flow diagrams which lead clearly from one stage of management to the next. There are, however, all-too-familiar difficulties in ensuring uniformity of approach by multiple authors. Thus, space given to the outdated dxylose test is almost double that allowed to ultrasonography in the jaundiced patient, where for instance the familiar catch of non-dilated ducts behind recent obstruction by stones, an important problem, is not mentioned. Elsewhere malabsorption is discussed almost entirely in terms of diarrhoea; macrocytic anaemia is barely discussed; endoscopic sclerotherapy seems under-valued; the failure of H2 antagonist therapy to alter the ultimate behaviour of ulcer disease is not mentioned; and the risks which hepatitis antigen carriers present are not mentioned.

The language could also be crisper (what does ‘haemoglobin may reflect blood loss or plasma loss and is thereby variable’ mean? Surely one problem is that acute blood loss does not change the haemoglobin) or clearer; what is aggressive medical therapy for bleeding diverticulosis?

The supporting references largely come from United States journals in the period 1978–80; this geographical selectivity is understandable and familiar, but irritating when it ignores or almost ignores the very great clinical contribution made by non-US gastroenterologists.

I am left with the feeling that the editor and authors have failed to capitalise on a good idea.

M J S LANGMAN

Atlas of colorectal tumours  By P Hermanek and K Karrer (Translated by Dr L H Sobin). (Pp. 148; illustrated; £35.00.) Butterworth, London: 1983. PVG Pharmazeutische Verlagsgesellschaft, subtitled to Butterworth Scientific Ltd, produce a series of clinical and pathological atlases specialising in three dimension diagrams to illustrate pathology and in this case epidemiology. In this atlas of colorectal tumours, Dr Sobin has translated the work of Professors Hermanek and Karrer, pathologist and epidemiologist respectively. It is 148 pages of beautiful photomicrographs, anatomical reconstructions and histograms, an almanac on colorectal neoplasms. Double page spreads are given over to artists drawings of colonic polyloid mucosa, immaculate macro-photographs and colourful block diagrams of the facts about tumour spread, prognosis, screening programmes etc. The majority of the data come from the Erlangen Registry of Colo-Rectal Polyps and Cancer but other big series are quoted. As well as epidemiological data there are also short sections on radiology and the surgical approaches to the various manifestations of colorectal malignancy, again pictorially perfect.

Having read and appreciated the format of the atlas I began to wonder about its audience. For me, a pathologist, I will find the histograms of survival data a useful reference base, the pathology least useful. I imagine physicians and surgeons may find the reverse and the book will provide for them a pleasant way of appreciating pathology. Overall the book is an enjoyable luxury for one’s library.

A B PRICE

Surgery III — gastroenterological surgery  Edited by M Irving and R W Bert Jr. (Pp. 384; illustrated; £27.00.) London: Butterworths, 1983. This text represents a valuable addition to the surgical literature covering a total of 15 topics ranging from oesophageal motility problems through the management of inflammatory bowel disease and jaundice to discussing alternatives in the management of rectal cancer and complications after gastrointestinal surgery.

The format involves presentation of the detailed thoughts of acknowledged experts on various subjects which are in addition subjected to generally detailed and critical assessment by their peers. It seems to have been editorial policy to interfere little in the various styles of each chapter and although this is generally refreshing, the reader may be irritated by the use of the American language in otherwise English text.

Of the 15 topics covered some have been reviewed historically and in great detail — for example, current surgical management of duodenal ulcer — in which T V Taylor brings us right up to date with his seromyotomy. William Silen responds in the commentary with a broader appraisal. The investigation and management of gastrointestinal bleeding is reviewed in critical detail, however, one or two of the other topics — for example, portal hypertension — are presented as a rather laboured personal experience and it is the commentary (by R Shields) that is of the greater value. In general, however, the
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commentaries on each chapter allow alternative opinions to be expressed with emphasis on certain aspects and occasional frank disagreement. The editors have, however, allowed one or two commentators to detail their own preferences and practices with little reference to the main text, as in laparoscopy in general surgery, which has resulted in the book being longer than was perhaps necessary.

J GUEST


There has been a recent proliferation of text books devoted to disorders of the pancreas. It is an unfortunate fact that the American literature on this subject is bedevilled with a lack of clarity of definition with regard to the differing forms of inflammatory disease of the pancreas. The contributors to this book have once more failed to take this important matter into consideration. To the interested European observer the presentations recall a sense of déjà vu phenomenon reminiscent of days before the Marseilles classification of 1962. It must also be said that there are numerous instances throughout this book of a lack of editorial control. Many chapters read like a series of personal essays which have been brought together in a somewhat haphazard manner.

Nevertheless, the text contains a large volume of information with a very adequate bibliography and is thus of help to a mature clinician. This book would provide a postgraduate student with a misleading and confusing picture of the present state of pancreatic surgery.

BRUCE TORRANCE


Intra-operative choledochoscopy is a controversial subject. For some biliary surgeons the choledochoscope is an essential tool; others have tried it and then given up. The instruments have developed rapidly over the last few years, so that many preliminary reports rapidly became obsolete. Considerable technical expertise is necessary, particularly with the flexible choledochoscopes.

There are still insufficient data with which to make authoritative judgements, and the authors have wisely aimed to provide a practical manual, rather than a review. In this they have generally succeeded, despite having a relatively small experience. The book is short (117 pages), but well presented, with good colour illustrations, photographs, and line diagrams.

Several criticisms can be made. There are very few references after 1980. The rigid type of choledochoscope receives only brief mention; it is considerably cheaper than the flexible version, and easier to use. Most surgeons starting to use choledochoscopy are concerned mainly about simple practical questions such as disinfection, and how to use equipment, such as cameras, which cannot be sterilised. The book gives little guidance on these aspects, and does not mention the recent introduction of instruments which can be fully immersed. British readers will be disappointed to find that the name of Professor Harold Hopkins is misspelt; the rod-lense system which he invented is reported as the Opkins system.

Despite these criticisms, I would recommend this book to all surgeons who are interested in choledochoscopy.

P B COTTON


This book takes over from where volume 2 left off in 1979 and attempts to provide a comprehensive review of the literature about somatostatin. Reading the foreword, one discovers that the book only covers the period to the end of 1981. This would be perfectly acceptable in a book published in the first half of 1982 but not in one published in the second half of 1983. In such a fast moving field of research, a two year delay is a serious deficit.

Individual chapters deal with a fairly large area of research – for example, biosynthesis, distribution, mode of action etc, and is divided and subdivided as appropriate. Each chapter, or in some instances, each section of a chapter, begins with a summary of the findings in volumes 2, followed under each subheading with a catalogue of published work. Besides quoting work which is out of date, the book suffers seriously from a lack of critical comment. The author makes little attempt to assess the validity or usefulness of any of the research, nor is there any synthesis of hypotheses which would enable the work presented to be more easily assimilated.

Presumably a book of this type is intended for a reader without an intimate knowledge of the literature. Such a reader might be left floundering, with the impression of a tremendous amount of work being done but with no general significance.

At a cost of £35 for a typeset book, which might be better entitled Historical research catalogue the market is likely to be small.

S R BLOOM