References


Book reviews

Digestive diseases Edited by J T Galambos and Theodore Hersh. (Pp 701; illustrated; £55.00.) Kent: Butterworths, 1983.

This is a medium sized comprehensive textbook of gut and liver disease, written by a team of authors from the Department of Medicine of the Emory University School, Atlanta, Georgia. The first section deals with symptoms or abnormal findings ('low resolution'). The main part of the book deals with 'high-level resolution' topics, — that is, diseases of the various organs discussed in conventional sequence. The term high resolution is unsatisfactory, because presumably a specific diagnosis represents a higher degree of resolution than malabsorption, enteric hyperoxaluria or protein losing enteropathy which are treated as separate entities in this section. The final section of the book is an 80 page appendix on radiological assessment with many good quality pictures of barium contrast radiology and a few of ultrasound and CT scan but none of ERCP. Unfortunately the detailed text repeats much of what has been written in earlier sections and the pictures would be better integrated into an otherwise unillustrated text.

The 'Descriptions of disease' are commendably succinct and mainly written in a didactic style with little indication of controversy. It is curious to start each section with action and finish with pathophysiology. The system of multiple stereotyped headings makes reading easy but leads to a lot of repetition and some unnecessary short paragraphs. The dangers of treatment are given due emphasis. My main adverse comments are (i) the book lacks balance and (ii) it is not clear who will benefit from reading it: (i) Some sections — for example, liver and malnutrition — are detailed and up-to-date with many recent references. Others are brief and inadequate with short reading lists only. This applies especially to carcinoma of the stomach and oesophagus (scarcely mentioned) and to the surgical management of peptic ulcer and inflammatory bowel disease. Postoperative complications, especially after peptic ulcer surgery, are not discussed. On the whole, I thought much of the liver section was excellent whereas the common chronic
The underlying disease demand that gastrointestinal disorders be given perfunctory treatment. (ii) 'This book was written to help physicians in their care of patients with digestive diseases'. It is certainly too detailed for the student, not practical enough for the resident, too unbalanced for those taking higher medical diplomas and, only in parts, up to the high standards required by trainee and trainer gastroenterologists. Internists will use the even larger and better proportioned rivals for occasional reference.

On balance therefore, I do not feel that I can recommend this book to any particular group of readers. This is a pity because some sections are undoubtedly good and stimulating.

GORDON SLADEN


The physician who cares for children soon realises that gastrointestinal complaints with or without underlying disease demand a sizeable proportion of his time. In this the third edition of Roy and Silverman's popular textbook, the authors have blended their 15 years' clinical experience with the host of new developments which have occurred in paediatric gastroenterology since their last edition. The aims are unchanged and the subject is presented in a clinically orientated manner. The book is considerably enlarged over previous editions and sections devoted to pathophysiological mechanisms are expanded, a weak point of the first two editions. The text as a whole has been revised, as have the key references at the end of each section, and some chapters – notably those concerned with immunology, diarrhoeal disorders, oesophageal disorders, inflammatory bowel diseases, liver disorders and nutritional care – have been expanded, taking recent developments into account. A wide variety of investigative modalities are now applied with much greater confidence to the child. The last chapter devoted to procedures should have been particularly valuable. It has, however, a number of shortcomings, especially related to the use of fibreoptic endoscopy. In a similar vein, psychosocial aspects of many chronic disorders and non-organic failure to thrive are poorly considered.

Arnold Silverman and Claude Roy have once again produced a textbook which will prove invaluable to those in training and a source of ready reference for all physicians who care for children with gastrointestinal disorders, particularly the non-specialist.

P J MILLA


This book is a highly specialised appraisal of the place of radiotherapy in the management of some rectal and many anal epidermoid cancers. Although the title describes irradiation as an 'alternative to radical surgery', the real contribution of the book is to show how in particular cases radical surgery is the only justifiable treatment, but that just as definitely in other circumstances irradiation is the best choice of treatment.

The book is divided into two sections, the first dealing with adenocarcinoma of the rectum and the second with epidermoid carcinoma of the anus. Each section is of almost equal length (100 pages) and both begin with excellent introductory chapters describing the epidemiologic background and pathological behaviour of the tumours. The historical data compressed into these introductions are handled fairly, sympathetically and comprehensively, and sets the stage beautifully for the subsequent highly technical chapters on treatment. This book is worth buying for these introductory chapters alone, with their enormous scholarship.

The treatment protocols developed by the Centre Leon Bérard, Lyons, are fully described and the results given in great detail. Most of this work has been carried out under the personal supervision of Professor Jean Papillon, and the results are outstandingly good. The case for radiotherapeutic treatment alone for early stage squamous carcinoma of the anal canal is established beyond reasonable doubt.

For adenocarcinoma of the rectum the technique of intracavitary irradiation of small, distal well differentiated lesions is shown to be effective in Professor Papillon's hands, with very careful selection by experts who cooperate closely with one another. Whether the technique is superior to local surgical removal is not answered convincingly – and the technique is clearly not going to be available except in a few centres with a very large patient pool to draw upon. Possibly as little as five per cent of all rectal cancers may be suitable for this form of therapy.

The book is beautifully produced and highly readable. No institution which is interested in rectal cancer should be without it, and every country needs one centre which can offer the sort of radiotherapy service that Professor Papillon has established in Lyons.