the editors been content with cosmetic changes, for, of the 95 contributors, 34 are new. There is a new section on special diagnostic procedures which is comprehensive and well illustrated and another new and useful section on nutritional management. There is one major weakness in the book. American scientists have made major contributions to the study of motor function and dysfunction in the digestive tract; this was reflected in Johnson's massive *Physiology of the gastrointestinal tract* in which 27% of the contents were devoted to muscle and nerve function. In this book, only 4% of the book deals with motility. In his foreword, Tom Almy mentions that 'among the 19 new chapters are those on . . . recent progress in the study of motility disorders . . .'. No such chapter is listed in the contents although there is a short chapter on 'Movement of the small and large intestine' by Cohen and Snape, who cite 17 of their own papers among the 96 references. Except for admirable chapters by Pope on the oesophagus, there is no practical advice on the measurement of motility, and although Gray reviews breath tests in the assessment of malabsorption, there is no mention of these as indicators of intestinal transit. To be fair, the clinical application or relevance of recent motility research is not always clear, but while this may be pertinent, it does not account for the failure to describe what is known in detail comparable to that applied elsewhere. The defect would seem to stem from the lack of editorial interest or expertise – or both – in this field. In this context, however, it is only fair to concede bias on the part of the reviewer; other readers will have other views. All in all, there is enough that is new to justify the purchase of this edition even if you have a previous edition.

In summary: carefully planned, carefully written, comprehensive, up to date, produced to a high standard and still way out in front.

DAVID WINGATE

Recent advances in hepatology Vol 1 Edited by H C Thomas and R N M MacSween. (Pp. 259; illustrated; £24.) Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone, 1983.

The torrent of publications in liver disease leaves all but the most dedicated journal reader bewildered. In many fields there seems to be a burgeoning literature but little improvement in the basic conceptual framework or real understanding. This, the first volume of the series, aims to give a practical update for clinicians and pathologists interested in liver disease. The editors have chosen 13 topics and the contributors are all well known and actively

engaged in research in the field.

It is impossible, because of constraints of space, to comment on each contribution but the reviewer particularly enjoyed the contribution by Dienstag on the current state of knowledge on non-A, non-B hepatitis. We cannot expect much more progress in this field until the viruses and the serological responses are reliably characterised. Halothane related liver disease used to be the cause of heated controversy, but the mechanisms of damage have now been unravelled and are lucidly reviewed by Neuberger and Davis. The principles illustrated may be applicable to alcohol and other drug hepatotoxicity. Simple guidelines for drugs prescribed for patients with liver disease are given by Bircher on the basis of current pharmacokinetic data. Primary biliary cirrhosis is subjected to critical analysis by E A Jones with particular reference to the immunopathology and possible mechanisms of damage. His recommendation that penicillamine should be used only in the context of a controlled trial is widely accepted. Hepatobiliary disease in childhood is reviewed by Howard and Mowat who emphasise the importance of early specialist investigations if the considerable benefits of surgery in selected cases are to be exploited. Gall stone dissolution and the relative merits of chenodeoxycholic acid and ursodeoxycholic acid is the subject of a well referenced paper by Bateson and Bouchier. Interferon, adenine arabinoside, and other approaches to management in chronic hepatitis B are well covered in the article by Howard Thomas and Weller and they address the important question of how to eliminate the virus after it becomes integrated into the host genome and is insusceptible to current antiviral therapy. Progress here is probably vital if the development of hepatocellular carcinoma is to be prevented. Dame Sheila Sherlock reviews the present status of treatment of portal hypertension. Injection sclerotherapy seems here to stay, at least meantime, but the role of beta blockers is much less certain and British experience is not as encouraging as that from France.

Other articles cover genetic aspects of liver disease (I R Mackay), acute liver failure (Gimson and Roger Williams), alcoholic liver disease (MacSween), copper metabolism (Sternlieb), and bile acid metabolism (Everson and Kern).

The editors are to be congratulated on this first volume which deserves to be widely read by general physicians and gastroenterologists. There are, however, a range of very similar publications originating from Europe and USA, and the choice of topics for the next volume needs careful consideration if widespread duplication is to be avoided.

I M MURRAY-LYON