example, in a section of great practical value on oesophageal obstruction.

The editors’ philosophy provide a framework for the book, and although there are 20 contributors, only six of the 22 (unnumbered) chapters does not have one of the editors as co-author.

The only omissions of note were the absence from the sensible chapter on oesophageal causes of chest pain of the recent useful work from Cardiff, and the relationship of asthma to gastro-oesophageal reflux was not discussed. Some practical procedures – the use of Celestin’s dilators and balloon dilators for example – are mentioned only briefly, the authors wisely confining themselves to techniques of which they have personal experience. Radiological illustrations are good, even though the book is not printed on glossy paper.

The presentation is marred by the American obsession with acronyms, the space saved by their use being squandered on terms like ‘state-of-the-art equipment’ and other circumlocutions. None of this makes the book any less essential for the gastroenterology library as the best currently available information on oesophageal disorders.

J R BENNETT


This two part text constitutes volume 1 of a new Diagnostic Radiology Series. There are 32 contributors, 17 from North America, and the emphasis is hepatic rather than biliary, the pancreas being largely avoided.

Part A deals with anatomy and physiology and describes in detail the range of diagnostic and interventional techniques now available. In part B the radiological investigation and management of specific clinical situations and pathological lesions are described. This format inevitably results in considerable overlap but the editors have encouraged this to present differences of opinion. It does, however, mean that an extensive search may be required to find all the text and illustrations related to a particular lesion. Throughout both parts there is a strong emphasis on angiography in all its aspects, reflecting the interest and experience of the three editors and it will be interesting to see how the impact of digital subtraction techniques affects subsequent editions. The overall quality of illustration is extremely high, these being numerous, large, and clearly annotated. A minor irritation is that serial figures of a particular case may have the main legend under the final figure several pages beyond the initial figure and associated text. In the reviewer’s copy one figure referred to in the text on hepatic embolisation was missing.

Although the intentional emphasis is on hepatic rather than biliary radiology, the chapter on direct cholangiography is disappointing and several of the illustrations chosen, even of common lesions, fall below the overall high standard. Stone extraction techniques and endoscopic sphincterotomy are only briefly mentioned but there is a whole chapter on choledochoscopy via the T-tube tract.

This is undoubtedly a major work and must be the most detailed and extensively illustrated text available on diagnostic and interventional radiology of the liver. It is an essential acquisition for any department with a specialist interest in gastroenterology and liver disease, especially one which performs regular angiography.

D J LINTOTT


There is now a plethora of books about the liver and liver disease; thus potential authors/editors and publishers must ask themselves at least two questions. First, is there a need for the book which we propose to produce? Second, who are we hoping will buy this book. To these the reviewer must add ‘Is this book any good?’

The liver in metabolic diseases contains the proceedings of the 35th Falk Symposium held in 1982. There are 42 chapters ranging from ‘Fructose 2, 6-biphosphate: a third messenger in endocrine regulation in liver metabolism?’ to up to date reviews of Wilson’s disease and glycogen storage disease. Although the topics are heterogenous, held together only by a tenuous common thread of ‘metabolic disease’, they have been very well chosen by the editors. Many of the topics are very hard to find in standard texts, many represent lacunae, at least in this reviewer’s knowledge and they are for the most part well written and up to date. I would particularly commend chapters on collagen metabolism (Hahn), mechanisms of liver metastases (Burger and Madnick) and serum albumin in liver disease (Rothschild et al).

Thus to answer the questions for the editors of this book I would say ‘yes, this fills in many nooks and crannies left vacant by large standard texts’. Both clinicians interested in liver disease should certainly browse extensively in the book as soon as
possible as one of its great sections is that it is close to 'state of the art' in many sections. The price is not stated but I hope that the book will not be too expensive as it deserves to be widely bought.

To answer the questions the reviewer must ask 'yes, this book is excellent, it is stimulating and informative'.

Finally, it is sad to record that of almost 80 contributors only one (Dr R G Long) is working in Britain. But this cloud has a silver lining for a British reader in that it gives access to authors, particularly from Europe, whose work is not so immediately familiar as that from traditional British research centres.

O F W JAMES


At first sight, a book about a frog might seem to offer little to gastroenterologists, but Rheobatrachus silus is no ordinary frog. To quote Dr Tyler: 'It is not much to look at, but it is unique in the Animal Kingdom in its habit of swallowing its fertilised eggs, converting its stomach to a uterus, and finally giving birth to fully formed young through its mouth'. It has been studied by a multidisciplinary group of investigators, and the accumulated knowledge has been assembled in one volume. Rheobatrachus was discovered in Queensland in 1973, and aroused interest because it appeared to belong to an amphibian family hitherto only reported in Africa and South America. Again, in Dr Tyler's words, 'The first report of gastric brooding was viewed with a sense of incredulity. It just seemed to many zoologists absolutely impossible. ... Nature declined even to referee the manuscript, indicating that it was of insufficient general interest to merit consideration, let alone expose to the normal refereeing process. This was a ludicrous comment as our subsequent experiences demonstrated.'

For gastroenterologists, the relevant part of this story is the work by Shearman, O'Brien, and Fanning on the mechanism of suppression of gastric acid, and motility, which allows the larvae to develop, undigested and undisturbed, in the maternal stomach; the larvae secrete prostaglandin E2, which differs from other forms of PGE2 by virtue of its amazing stability in dilute aqueous solution. Apart from this, the book contains everything that is known about Rheobatrachus. This ranges from accounts of its behaviour, which seems at times almost human ('Sometimes the frogs remain in the same position for several hours either during the night or day ... Males have amplexed with females in an inguinal embrace ...') to morphological detail which will daunt the non-zoologist ('The vertebral column ... exhibits the unusual feature of urostyle transverse processes'). Rheobatrachus is, however, a challenge to biologists rather than to gastroenterologists, for we can block acid secretion at the drop of a tablet; how can the species have evolved in accordance with accepted theories of evolution? Not one, but two steps must have occurred together, namely the decision by the mother to adopt gastric brooding and the ability of the larvae to secrete PGE2. The enigma remains.

There is a sad postscript to the book which is not recorded. Three years of drought have brought about the disappearance of Rheobatrachus from the streams and rills of the Blackall and Conondale Ranges, and none has been found in that time. One frog remains alone in captivity in Adelaide - and it, alas, is a male.

DAVID WINGATE

News

International Symposium on Obesity Surgery

This first symposium will be held from 3-6 October 1984 in Genoa, Italy. Further details from the Scientific Secretariat, Dr Ezio Gianetta, Istituto di Patologia Chirurgica, Università di Genova, Ospedale S. Martino, 16132 Genova, Italy.

Hepatology 1984: advances in diagnostics, disease mechanisms, and liver transplantation

The annual postgraduate course of the American Association for the Study of Liver Disease will be held at the Chicago Marriott Hotel in Chicago, Illinois, USA, from 8-9 November 1984. Further details from Linda Leiby, c/o Charles B Slack, Inc, 6900 Grove Road, Thorofare, NJ 08086, USA.

Coeliac Trust

The Coeliac Trust is a registered charity existing to promote and fund research into coeliac disease. The Trust is expecting to spend some £50 000 on research in 1985. The Trust receives its funds from donations and legacies - a recent legacy of over £7000 has been most welcome. The Trust makes grants for salaries of research workers for one or two years and for associated costs, and in addition makes grants for single items of equipment or for other purposes. Further details from the Hon Secretary, The Coeliac Trust, PO Box 181, London NW2 2QY.