

Books

Core textbook of gastroenterology Edited by G L Eastwood. (Pp. 458; illustrated; price not stated.) Philadelphia: J B Lippincott, 1984.

Yet another 'concise' account of gastroenterology and liver disease, aimed at medical students, to add to the large number already available. It claims to emphasise the relevance of basic sciences to clinical medicine, but the anatomy and physiology in this book are rather patchy. It is a multiauthor book, mainly from Massachusetts, and few of the contributors are well known in Britain. Most of the chosen topics are covered adequately but as its title suggests, it is not a reference work. As one might expect, nearly all the references quoted are American.

Regular readers of *Gut* will have little use for this book, and there is no particular reason to recommend it to students when one considers the wide choice of alternatives.

NEIL MCINTYRE

Gastrointestinal disorders of the elderly By Lawrence J Brandt with contributions by Gerald H Bezahler and Ellen L Wolf. (Pp. 636; illustrated; \$80.50.) New York City: Raven Press, 1984.

As a geriatrician with particular interest in gastroenterology, I found this book disappointing. There is a fundamental problem in the interpretation of the word 'elderly'. American literature uses the word to describe much younger populations than in the United Kingdom. Thus, this book contains many references to patients aged 60 and even 50.

Much of the information is readily available in large textbooks of general medicine and gastroenterology. The text provides a comprehensive list of diseases at the expense of highlighting key problems. There has been little attempt to compare and contrast the elderly and younger age groups with respect to differential diagnosis, disease presentation, therapeutic goals, and assessment of surgical mortality and morbidity rates. There are some useful passages on aging physiology (although the studies are often based on small numbers), systemic disease, and the management of jaundice. There is little practical advice, however, on problem solving or on treatment regimes. The value of non-invasive imaging in diagnosis could have been more fully stressed. No discussion was attempted on the choice between attempting palliation and surgical cure in patients with malignant disease.

The book contains a number of contentious

statements. These include 'coeliac disease is the commonest cause of steatorrhoea', 'viral hepatitis is common in the elderly', 'vascular ectasia of the colon is the most frequent cause of recurrent bleeding of the lower GI tract'. Cholecystectomy for asymptomatic gall stones was recommended in the elderly; without consideration for the logistic implications of such a policy. Screening elderly populations for colonic cancer was also advised. There were a number of other omissions, for example, the increasing diagnosis of primary biliary cirrhosis in the elderly, and the lack of discussion on early or late surgery for acute upper GI bleeding.

Neither gastroenterologists nor geriatricians will find this book a helpful addition to their library. Gastroenterologists will find little new in the text, while geriatricians will derive little practical advice in solving their problems.

J CROKER

Current gastroenterology Edited by G Gitnick. (Pp. 461; illustrated; £59.40.) Chichester: John Wiley, 1984.

This is the fourth annual review of gastroenterology edited by the indefatigable Dr Gitnick. It is an admirable attempt to summarise and assess the advances made each year and this volume is concerned with the year 1981 to 1982. There are chapters on the oesophagus, stomach, small intestine, colon, pancreas, GI hormones, GI malignancies, extra-intestinal manifestations of GI disease and on endoscopy. Each chapter has been written by authorities in their field and has been reviewed by the editor and external assessors in an attempt to maintain a high standard. Several chapters are outstanding, others less so. The chapter on the stomach is a well written exhaustive summary and covers both physiological and clinical aspects. The colonic chapter provides an excellent critical review of the year's advances, predominantly in the clinical arena. The contributors to this chapter make the nice point that 'while a good deal was written (during the year) major advances seem to be rather scarce'. The pancreatic chapter is almost entirely clinical but provides a clear up to date review. Some chapters, such as that on the oesophagus, cover several years and attempt to put recent advances into some historical context. Other chapters are generally workmanlike and helpful.

Nowadays it is unusual to find a gastroenterologist who is not very well informed of recent advances. It is difficult to escape the large number of books regularly published and which vie with each other to keep us up to date, from the excellent *Clinics in gastroenterology* (three times a year), to *Current*