Correspondence. Books


Books

This is an excellent if somewhat expensive little book with 60 clear, colour illustrations. It has, however, some of the most appalling line drawings that I have seen in any textbook from west of the iron curtain. A lot of thought has gone into the production of the text. It is a great pity that as much thought did not go into the selection and production of the illustrations. Some of the early illustrations are naively simple with anatomical details that are reminiscent of the words of the song 'The thigh bone is connected to the hip bone!' The book is extensively illustrated with amateurish line drawings by Mr T S Quinn. There is a certain attraction in the drawings of an enthusiastic amateur but it is difficult to forgive the appalling reproduction. The publishers John Wright say that the book was printed in the United States of America. It certainly does not live up to the standard that one would expect from that country. Not only are the line drawings tiny and indistinct but the print type used for the Tables has an old fashioned look about it. Some of the choices of illustration are so poor as to be laughable; the biggest laugh of the book comes on page 115 in which the whole page is taken up by a sexy, sultry, nude tailors-model sitting uncomfortably on a hospital ward about to start colostomy irrigation. The model's expression and pose are so provocative that the reader cannot resist drawing a balloon coming out of the models mouth and adding his or her amusing caption.
Having been scathing about the illustrations let me hasten to redress the balance by praising the wisdom of the practical tips to occasional stoma surgeons and to stoma therapy nurses. All of these will read this book with profit.

There are certain surprising omissions. There is relatively little about continent ileostomies and nothing about continent colostomies, not even condemnation. There is far too little about the physiology of colonic irrigation or about the physiological effects of the continent nipple valve ileostomy.

I suspect that the book has been a long time in gestation. In a short addendum at the end of the book there are cryptic references to 'modern advances' such as perineal pouches with ileoanal anastomoses and stomahesive rings replacing karaya gum. These 'addenda' suggesting that the manuscript of the book was finished at least five years ago.

Having picked it up and browsed through it at a book stall, I do not think I would spend £35 to buy it, but I would suggest to my stoma therapist that we included it in the gastroenterological unit library.

J ALEXANDER-WILLIAMS

It is always refreshing to look at a medical book which is in no sense a textbook. Controversies in Gastroenterology certainly does not come into this category. It consists of debate by experts concerning areas of gastroenterology where there are differing opinions about the correct therapy or mode of investigation necessary for patients with a variety of gastrointestinal disorders. The contributors are all distinguished American clinicians – though one is from industry – and the editor is Gary Gitnick, Professor of Medicine UCLA.

The topics that have been chosen for debate include aspects of the treatment of Crohn's disease, alcoholic hepatitis, chronic hepatitis B, pancreatitis, the place of endoscopy in intestinal bleeding, immunisation of needle stick patients with hepatitis B immune globulin, perioperative nutritional support, etc – 10 in all. In each case the therapeutic manoeuvre or investigation is first supported and then attacked by two different clinicians, and a
casting view is expressed by the editor. The clinicians chosen have a particular interest in and experience of the subject under debate, and their own contributions to the literature feature heavily in the useful and extensive bibliography.

The accounts make interesting reading and give an excellent background to each topic. As the book has 270 pages and only 10 subjects are discussed it must be obvious that each is addressed in some depth. For this reason the comments of the moderator are valuable. There are no real surprises, except that is perhaps the choice of some of the original subjects for discussion. I would have thought, for example, that the problem concerning whether mercaptopurine should be used in Crohn's disease could be summed up as 'rarely', and that 46 pages of argument for and against are unlikely to have much impression on the gastroenterologist who looks after a difficult case of Crohn's disease. The point of this book, however, is that it does allow one to see how well-founded or otherwise are the claims for the effectiveness of one treatment or the advisability of a particular investigation. In this respect the book should be widely read, though many volumes would be required to deal with the multitude of gastrointestinal enigmas that face us. In summary – a useful book if you are interested in the 10 topics that it covers – and important if you are working in these fields.

A E READ


I found this an enjoyable and readable review of 16 different aspects of gastrointestinal disorders in the elderly. An attempt has been made to discuss disease presentation against a background of age changes in the gastrointestinal tract. Differences between the elderly and younger age groups are reviewed. An up to date assessment has been made of current knowledge (or lack of it) of anatomy and physiology.

There is an excellent introductory chapter on evaluation of GI symptoms in the elderly. Up to date and helpful discussions follow on 'Functional and histological gastric changes', 'Malabsorption', 'Faecal incontinence', 'The acute abdomen', 'Polyps and tumours of the large intestine', and 'Pancreatic disease'. I found the sections relating to the oesophagus, peptic ulcer, diverticular disease, and hepatobiliary disorder, a little disappointing. I was hoping for more practical guidance on differential diagnosis and management of major problems – for example, acute GI bleeding and oesophageal stricture.

The management of gall stones was well described with a sensible review of ERCP and endoscopic papillotomy. The importance of gall stones as a treatable and common cause of jaundice, however, was under stressed. The assessment of jaundice as a presenting sign could have been more fully discussed.

I would have liked to have seen more on anti-inflammatory drugs and peptic ulcer, malignant change in the stomach, iron deficiency anaemia, and occult GI bleeding, and the effect of age on liver function and less on diverticular disease, and oesophageal function.

Overall, the book succeeds in being short, informative and readable. It will be of interest to both geriatricians and gastroenterologists. It may, however, be a little over priced at £20.

J R CROCKER

News

Leeds Course in Clinical Nutrition
To be held at the Department of Medicine, St James's University Hospital, Leeds from 3–6 September 1985. Details from Mr T D Bilham, Department of Adult and Continuing Education, University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT. Tel: 0532-431751, Ext. 7236.

XI1th Congress of the European Society for Artificial Organs (ESAO)
The 12th Congress of the European Society for Artificial Organs (ESAO) will take place in Athens between 16 and 19 September 1985. In conjunction with this symposium a pre-congress meeting to the IDF-Congress, concerning the artificial endocrine pancreas, insulin delivery devices, pancreas and islet transplantation will also be held. For further information Professor S Raptis, MD, PO Box 14127, 11510 Athens, Greece.

Annual Joint Scientific Meeting
The American Pancreatic Association and the National Pancreatic Cancer Project of the Organ Systems Coordinating Center will hold a joint meeting on 7 and 8 November 1985 at the Ambassador West Hotel in Chicago, Illinois, USA. Information from Dr Vay Liang W Go, Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minnesota, 55905, USA.