and readable. The introduction by A Silberberg sets the scene by defining what is known and not known about mucus structure and function. The following five chapters are concerned with regulation of mucus secretion and provide interesting information on the factors which may control output by the various cell types of respiratory and intestinal mucosa. The remaining nine chapters are devoted to mucus structure and function, mechanisms of mucus secretion and gel formation, and role of the non-glycoprotein components of mucus in gel formation. Each chapter is concise with up to date references and where relevant, good quality illustrations. The discussions that follow individual chapters are extremely valuable and help the reader analyse more critically the content of each chapter. It will soon become apparent to the reader that there is still considerable controversy about the basic structure of mucus gel let alone its control mechanisms and functional significance.

As with most symposium publications, the quality and originality of the results are quite variable. Nevertheless this book will prove invaluable to those interested in mucus research and to those clinicians who deal with patients with abnormal mucus function.

W D W REES

Esophageal and gastric emptying Edited by A Dubois and D O Castell. (Pp. 159; illustrated; \$78.00.) Boca Baton, Florida: CRC Press Inc, 1984. This book provides a good review of the state of knowledge about oesophageal and gastric emptying in man. It evolved from a North American meeting on the subject in 1982, and the 15 authors cover physiological mechanisms, methods of measurement and the disorders that these methods have uncovered. Although more comprehensive reviews on some specific points are available elsewhere in various books and journals, this book achieves a concise but comprehensive and balanced overview which fulfils the editors' intention to provide an introduction to the subject for the young clinical investigator and assist the basic scientist seeking to relate his observations to disorders of the upper gastrointestinal tract. Indeed, it meets these two requirements very satisfactorily.

The book is of lesser value to the working clinician. A depressing aspect of research in this field, which the book reflects, is that investigators have so far failed to grapple with many simple questions of direct clinical significance. Which patients should undergo specific tests of oesophageal clearance or measurements of gastric emptying? Which abnormalities have direct relevance to diagnosis or therapy? These questions

should be tackled, difficult though they are. The young investigator will find this book worth reading for not only does it tell him what is known, but by omission, shows him where research is now required.

R C HEADING

Mechanisms of intestinal electrolyte transport and regulation by calcium Edited by M Donowitz and G W G Sharp. (Pp 388; illustrated; £60.) New York, USA: Alan R. Liss, 1984.

This volume is a collection of reviews presented at a Kroc Foundation Symposium in September 1983.

Most of the 21 chapters can be divided into three groups: (i) reviews of intestinal transport mechanisms, with emphasis on vesicle studies and colonic transport but with little or no reference to the role of Ca^{2+} ; (ii) reviews of cell calcium homeostasis and measurement, with no reference to the intestine; and (iii) reviews of cellular regulation of intestinal transport processes, with emphasis on Ca^{2+} .

Therefore, while there is no doubt that most chapters in the first two groups are well written by respected authorities, it is only in the third group of chapters that their authors seriously address topics suggested by the title of the book.

It makes sense to bring together at a symposium experts from different, but converging, fields and allow them to interact. I'm sure they did. But the reader of this book cannot benefit from such interaction as none of it is recorded. Thus, what might have been an excellent format for a conference is not very effective as a book. Editors must edit. They have not done so here. What they have done is contribute three chapters to the book. All are excellent. Two of them are central to what should have been the theme of the book. The other is not – but is an interesting review of drug therapy in diarrhoeal diseases.

MAYNARD CASE

Books received

Long cases in general medicine Edited by R E Pounder. (Pp. 234; not illustrated; no price stated.) Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications, 1983.

Neodymium-Yag laser in medicine and surgery Edited by S N Joffe. (Pp. 282; illustrated; \$50.00.) Amsterdam: Elsevier Science Publishing Co, 1983.

Dictionnaire d'informatique. Anglais Francais 7th ed By M Ginguy. (Pp. 264; not illustrated; Ff.113.) Paris, France: Masson Editeur, 1983.