In conclusion, it seems that any benefit from raising gastric pH, in critically ill patients, must be balanced against possible problems of Gram-negative pneumonia, crossinfection and wound infection. Because this is the largest study on cimetidine usage in an intensive care unit, it might be valuable for the authors to review their data to ascertain if these problems were significant.

N J PARR

*Dept of Surgery,
University of Liverpool,
PO Box 147,
Liverpool L69 3BX.*

Books

Gastrointestinal physiology Edited by L R Johnson. (Pp. 164; illustrated; £16.50.) St. Louis: Mosby, 1985.

In reviewing this text by Johnson and his colleagues, I find it difficult not to draw comparisons with the slightly older work, *Physiology of the digestive tract*, by H W Davenport (Year Book Medical Publishers, Chicago, 5th ed, 1982). Both texts are aimed at the same group: medical and graduate students. Both use a similar format: preparatory chapters on control, followed by more detailed sections on motility, secretions, digestion, and absorption. Both are also rather slim paperbacks although Davenport's is 80 pages longer, with a smaller typeface, for an extra £6.

The similarities end here. Davenport's text provides a relatively up to date and comprehensive account of gastrointestinal physiology. As such it is suitable for the medical student eager to read more of the subject, or just wanting to clarify lecture material. The same cannot be said for Johnson's text. This is too brief to be really useful: students may find the subject covered in equivalent depth in their standard physiology texts. The diagrams are generally uninspired, and over-simplified to the extent of inaccuracy.

The chapter on digestion and absorption has been rewritten for this third edition, and the addition of a chapter on fluid and electrolyte absorption is to be welcomed. The contents and diagrams in these chapters, as well as that on gastrointestinal circulation are of a generally higher standard than the rest of the contributions. Overall, I shall still be recommending Davenport as a text for further reading for first year medical students, although it is rather too costly for many students to contemplate purchase.

BARRY H HIRST

Gastrointestinal motility: the intergration of physiological mechanisms By D Grundy. (Pp. 184; £29.95.) Hingham, Ma: MTP Press, 1985.

The title of this little book has obvious appeal for students and teachers of gastrointestinal physiology as this is a topic which is poorly covered in textbooks. The format of the book is good. The first four chapters cover general aspects of structure function and control. They are followed by chapters on oesophagus, stomach, small intestine and large intestine. Two final chapters take a coordinated look at motility in the fasted and fed states. Although this format is good, it inevitably means that the book begins with the complex and often unresolved problems of smooth muscle innervation, the electrophysiology of intramural plexuses, the nature of neuromuscular and ganglionic transmitters etc. This is good stuff for the enthusiast. It is hard work for the uninitiated, however, who might be tempted to give up as early as Figure 1 – a schematic portrayal of the extrinsic innervation of the bowel wall, containing no less than eight abbreviations and resembling an aerial diagram of Crewe railway station. But he should press on for, although there are some difficult patches ahead, by and large, David Grundy leads us through the complexity with a good balance between experimental evidence and didactic statements.

Apart from the problem outlined above and a few niggles – for example, the fact that gastrointestinal peptides are referred to uncritically as hormones, the book has two drawbacks. First, it is selective. Thus consideration of mucosal movement (as distinct from movement of the whole bowel) is deliberately omitted, mastication is not mentioned, while the buccal and pharyngeal phases of swallowing, and vomiting are both restricted to a small paragraph. In my view a monograph aimed at senior undergraduate and postgraduate students should be comprehensive. Secondly, it is prohibitively expensive. If publishers cannot find a way of producing a book of this nature at less than 16.4p per page, one wonders if authors will continue to offer their services. I suspect that the price will deter private sales. This is a pity because the serious student would derive much from this convenient little book.

MAYNARD CASE

Gastrointestinal disorders in diabetes mellitus By S. Forgacs. (Pp. 104; illustrated; £8.50.) Budapest: Akademiai Kiado Publ. House, 1985.

The incidences of diabetes is probably increasing – it is certainly one of the commoner disorders of civilisation. While 'improvements' in treatment have lessened the rate at which complications develop the increased life expectancy of the diabetic makes the