mounted that nutritional supplements are of clinical benefit and no clear guidelines are given as to which patients should be selected.

Overall, I found this book expensive and disappointing. I doubt whether geriatricians or readers of *Gut* will place it in their library.

JOHN R CROKER

Vascular disease of the gut. Edited by A Marston (Pp. 186; illustrated; £42.50). London: Arnold, 1986.

This book is more than an expansion of the highly acclaimed *Intestinal ischaemia* which was published in 1977. Mr Marston has invited colleagues in the United Kingdom, Ireland, Sweden, and the United States of America, to join him in producing what is essentially a new book. Many of the qualities, for which *Intestinal ischaemia* was commended, have been retained. The reader is provided, in a slim volume, with a survey of current knowledge in this subject. Illustrations and diagrams are well chosen and, on the whole, lucidly drawn. Mr Marston writes of vascular diseases of the intestine and for his cautious, measured approach to their surgical treatment. Of particular value is the last chapter in which he summarises current views on intestinal vascular disease and the implications for clinical practice.

All too frequently in the past, clinicians have been rather dismissive and simplistic towards vascular disease of the intestine. The view has been that very little could be done for patients with acute intestinal ischaemia, because the catastrophe carried a high mortality: surgery was confined to extensive, and perhaps repeated, resection of gangrenous bowel. There was little opportunity for removing the vascular occlusion by arterial surgery, other than, on occasion, by mesenteric embolectomy. Chronic intestinal ischaemia was viewed as rare: its precise diagnosis was difficult, and the evidence, that surgery was of any benefit, sparse. This book shows that such simplistic views are no longer tenable.

Research into the mesenteric vascular system has produced a large volume of interesting and important knowledge, but unfortunately a gap still remains between these studies and their clinical application. It will repay the clinician to read carefully the chapters on the regulation and distribution of intestinal flow, and particularly the laboratory studies of intestinal ischaemia and tests of intestinal viability.

The chapters on acute and chronic intestinal ischaemia are especially valuable to the clinician. Professor Moossa and his colleagues describe the treatment of superior mesenteric arterial embolus quite properly in some detail, for it is in this territory that a surgeon can improve results. The chapter on

chronic intestinal ischaemia has been written by Mr Marston, whose experience is considerable, if not unique. His conclusions should be read not only by surgeons interested in the treatment of intestinal ischaemia, but also by all enthusiasts who believe that they have discovered a new explanation for, or treatment of, vague abdominal complaints.

There is very little to criticise. Although the chapter on pseudomembranous colitis has been very well written by Keighley and Burden, the reasons for its inclusion in this book are not entirely clear. The radiographs reproduced in the first chapter to illustrate vascular anatomy of the intestine could be improved. The diagrams of operative procedures are drawn to a high standard, but some could be improved—for example, those on page 69. There is one obvious error in describing the course of the superior mesenteric artery which runs posterior to (not 'in front of') the neck of the pancreas, and crosses anterior to the uncinate process (not posterior to).

Mr Marston should be congratulated for producing a book which will rekindle interest in vascular disease of the intestine. This book will undoubtedly become a major and classic contribution to this most difficult subject.

R SHIELDS

Digestion and the structure and function of the gut. By D F Magee, and A F Dalley II. (Pp. 359; illustrated; £58.10.) Basel, Switzerland: Karger, 1986.

In its objectives, the book is admirable – to weld the structure and function of the alimentary system (without liver, but with biliary system) into one interpretable whole. The gallant attempt fails because the authors do not apply enough of the lessons of human physiology and pathophysiology and because they have not thought quite deeply enough (although this aspect is more satisfactory in Dr Magee's case than most other similar reviews).

Some examples may illustrate these points. The discussion starts with salivary secretion (although the last chapter, quite appropriate in a book of this sort, might better have been first – that is, the control of food and fluid intake) but the discussion of the composition of saliva does not include important components such as nitrate and growth factors, both of which are very topical in their connection with potential disease. No mention is made of the lessons (about swallowing, chewing, etc) which are derivable from the sicca syndrome; Horner's syndrome; abnormalities of salivary innervation; drugs; etc. In the motor function of the oesophagus, the factors involved in oesophagitis are not clearly discussed and their lessons for the normal