of different shapes of ileostomy bags accompanied by the legend – 'numerous modifications of ileostomy appliance are available, so with care the appropriate appliance for each individual patient can be identified'. The statement and the photographs are unhelpful, they give no indication of what is meant by 'care' and there is no indication why any particular type of appliance is suitable for any particular patient. Another ridiculous illustration is a familiar triangular diagram which most of us recognise as having been used to illustrate the concept of the solubility characteristics of bile. The diagram appears twice (Figs 8.6 and 10.16) with the same cryptic legend which does nothing to explain the concept. I suggest that in the next edition they stick to line drawings and make each figure speak for itself.

Because this is a practical book based on their own experience many of the statements are didactic and ex cathedra rather than based on any scientifically proven facts. For example on the penultimate page of the text they are writing about the management of the granulating wound after excision of a fistula in ano and say 'In practice, packs with eusol and paraffin alternating with proflavine produces satisfactory results.' It seems as if their old chief taught them to do that 20 years ago and they have no reason to regret it. In the section on surgical therapy for the short bowel syndrome in Crohn's disease, they describe wholly irrational and frankly dangerous manoeuvres to slow intestinal transit, such as vagotomy and pyloroplasty, interposed reversed loops of intestine and the creation of valves. It is horrifying to think that in some parts of the world someone will read this book and believe that these distinguished experienced authors were advocating anti-peristaltic small bowel loops for the short bowel syndrome in Crohn's disease. It is true that they vaguely condemn them but this does not undo the harm that has been done by dignifying them by inclusion.

When discussing the management of colovesical fistulas complicating diverticular disease they make the didactic statement – 'certainly there is no place for one stage resection for chronic fistula'. I would take the opposite didactic view that one stage resection and primary anastomosis is the procedure of choice for a chronic fistula. In this condition the rectum is always normal and once the phlegmenous mass of sigmoid colon has been lifted out of the pelvis it can be resected and a mobilised descending colon brought down and anastomosed to the upper rectum at the level of the sacral promontory without undue difficulty.

Of course, we are all entitled to our opinions and this book is essentially the personal opinions of Smith and Taylor and should be read and treasured as such. It cannot be compared with the carefully reasoned pros and cons of discussion that characterises some of the current textbooks of the surgery of the lower bowel. Nevertheless there is much food for thought and at under £20 it is well worth buying if you have any interest in this field of surgery.

J ALEXANDER-WILLIAMS

News

BSG Research Award 1987
A three page summary of personal research work is invited by The British Society of Gastroenterology for the 1987 Research Medal. A bibliography may also be submitted if desired. The Award consists of a medal and £100 prize. The recipient of the Award will be aged 40 years or less when delivering the lecture during the Autumn Meeting of the Society in September 1987. All (or a substantial part) of the work must have been performed in the UK or Eire. Applications (six copies) should be made to: The Honorary Secretary, BSG, 3, St. Andrew's Place, London, NW1 4LB, by 1 May 1987.

Bayliss and Starling Meeting
This meeting to be held in Liverpool from 29–30 September 1986, will include a symposium on mechanisms of regulatory peptide biosynthesis. Further details from Professor G J Dockray, Physiological Laboratory, University of Liverpool, Brownlow Hill, PO Box 147, Liverpool L69 3BX.

1987 International Symposium on Viral Hepatitis and Liver Disease
This symposium will be held at The Barbican Centre in London from 26–28 May 1987. Further details from Dr Ralph Kohn, Advisory Services Medical Symposia Ltd, 79 Wimpole Street, London W1M 7DD.

Basel Liver Week
This will be held from 12–21 October 1986. Further details may be obtained from Falk-Foundation eV, Habsburgerstrasse 81, D-7800 Freiburg i Br, West Germany.

Alcohol Related Problems
The Seventh International Conference will be held in Liverpool from 5–10 April 1987. Further details from The Conference Secretary, 1st Floor, The Fruit Exchange, Victoria Street, Liverpool L2 6QU.