past decade. It should also prove instructive and is to be recommended to all who have patients with problems of this type.

A N SMITH

Acute pancreatitis


This is another multi-author book reviewing all aspects of acute pancreatitis. It represents the proceedings of a symposium held in Ulm in 1986. Of the 53 separate contributions, 38 are from centres in Germany with a high proportion from Ulm itself: in addition there are six presentations from the USA and two each from Italy, France, Britain, Sweden — and one from Finland. There is a considerable degree of overlap between the various sections and a further criticism must be that some of the papers present unfinished work — for instance, the paper on gabexate mesilate which merely outlines a trial which had not yet started — and in others — as in the contribution on fine needle aspiration of pancreatic exudate — the data provided are insufficient to support the conclusions which have been drawn.

In spite of these criticisms, this is a valuable book for the clinician with a particular interest in the management of this difficult condition. It provides a good review of the German experience and their contributions to our knowledge — and this is particularly useful. There are also excellent reviews from Drs Frey and Warshaw on the strategy for the surgical management of gall stone pancreatitis, and the management of pancreatic abscesses, respectively.

Regrettably, there has not been any major advance in the management of acute pancreatitis over the last 20 or 30 years — at least sufficient to cut into the established mortality for this condition — and this book follows a general trend in that it only chips away at the periphery of the problem, it does not provide any new information on a real breakthrough.

J E TRAPNELL

Liver pathology


This volume on liver pathology in the Contemporary issues in surgical pathology series, is a companion for volumes 2 and 4 which covered the gastrointestinal tract. There are 19 chapters reviewing nearly all the major aspects of liver disease — for example, viral disease, granulomas, biliary disease, drugs and the liver, alcoholic liver disease, tumours, paediatric problems, etc. The editors, Professors Peters and Craig, have invited a group of international contributors who maintain a high standard throughout. As well as the pathology, each chapter has a brief review of the relevant clinical data, natural history, and ends with a good bibliography. The illustrations are of high quality, vital to a pathology text, but some suffer from being too small. The book is easy to read, however, a neat reference source and a swift up-to-date overview on the major diagnostic problems of hepatic pathology. It complements other liver pathology books currently on the market and is well worth the £52 investment. It is an excellent memorial to Professor Robert Peters.

ASHLEY B PRICE

Cancer of the liver, oesophagus, and nasopharynx


The connection between these three cancers is that their incidence is high in China which implies that there must be extrinsic factors responsible for the increased frequency. In all three cancers the treatment is usually non-curative so prevention is likely to make the most impact on reducing the death rate. To stimulate greater German-Chinese cooperation in the field of oncology the German Cancer Research Center (DKFZ) held a symposium in Heidelberg in July 1985. Springer-Verlag have, with their usual exemplary editing, produced a book with the preface written in October 1986, published in 1987 and received for review at the end of 1987.

The first presentation is on selenium as a possible chemopreventive agent against cancer. There are 10 short chapters on cancer of the liver. Ten on oesophageal cancer, ranging from epidemiology, to carcinogens of the diterpene ester type and nitrosamines, ending with treatment. China has the highest incidence of oesophageal cancer in the world in males at 250/100 000 compared with England and Wales at 8/100 000. It is still not clear from this or other data whether their good results are due to selection of early cases, a different disease process related to aetiology other than smoking and alcohol, or actually better treatment. Finally there are eight presentations of nasopharyngeal cancer. The histopathological aspects are well covered emphasising that of the three histological types (i) squamous cell carcinoma; (ii) non-keratinising carcinoma and (iii) indiffereniated carcinoma, the latter is associated with the Epstein-Barr Virus related to Burkitt’s lymphoma, generally has a better prognosis because it responds to radiotherapy and has a significantly higher incidence in China than elsewhere.

This book costs DM128 or £43. It is a pity that
much of the information is not available in routinely published medical journals.

R J EARLAM


Berzelius was a distinguished biochemist in whose honour the Swedish Society of Medicine brought together in 1986 a group of well known investigators all keenly interested in the aetiology of inflammatory bowel disease. This edited volume of the papers presented at that meeting provides an excellent summary of each person's contribution to knowledge as part of a well referenced review. It was appropriate that chemical studies were well represented by studies on mucin glycoproteins, eicosanoids, and the possible role of aluminium as an environmental factor. All disciplines contributed, however, epidemiology, genetics, immunopathology, immunology and microbiology. The possible role of several environmental factors was explored such as smoking, diet and the contraceptive pill. A commentary on classification of these disorders emphasising their common features and summaries of recent and potential advances in treatment completes the text. The book is compact, lucid, and well illustrated.

Dr Jarnerot is to be congratulated on organising such a stimulating meeting and on editing so well a comprehensive readable review. The book can be recommended to all who wish to bring themselves up to date on a rapidly advancing subject.

J E LENNARD-JONES


This is another handbook on diagnosis, management and treatment of medical gastroenterology. I would like the next edition to start with a chapter on the supreme importance of listening to the patient, then amplifying the history by selective questions, and how most diagnoses are made by history, some by signs, and only a few by tests. Yes, 'It is vital to find exactly what the patient means by constipation', but why define diarrhoea by 'stool consistency not stool frequency'? Should not doctors be told to ask patients with diarrhoea about alcohol consumption and sexual orientation and practices?

Six chapters on symptoms have a dated air, as if there was no science of decision making. We are told 50 causes of gastrointestinal bleeding, but not their relative frequency, nor which questions and answers are the most selective in favouring or excluding a specific diagnosis, let alone any algorithms. Ought not a proctoscope be used to look for haemorrhoids?

Part 2 covers seven groups of diseases, with spelling such as behanithal and stuperese. H2 blockers are still given many times a day instead of each evening. Yes, in Mallory-Weiss syndrome 'the history may be typical', but what are the key features?

Part 3 discusses malnutrition and enteral and parenteral nutritional support.

Doctors use various techniques in learning their craft. Some consult one of the many standard detailed textbooks. Those who prefer brisk handbooks in note form will find this useful if they buy it.

J H BARON

Books received


Cryptosporidium sp. and other intestinal coccidia. By G C Cook. (Pp. 38; illustrated; £7.00.) London: Bureau of Hygiene & Tropical Diseases, 1987.
