a medical research project; science is all. This may explain a 73 page chapter on gastrointestinal hormones which contains almost nothing that any clinician needs to know, although doubtless many things that a clinical scientist should know. Ten Italians have been imported from Bologna to write two relatively short chapters on the management and clinical aspects of inflammatory bowel disease: presumably a task too intellectually demeaning for an American at this point in time. The structure of the American book is orthodox, with chapters devoted to different organs, to cancer, endoscopy and nutrition, leaving the onus of deciding what to report on the individual contributors.

In the UK, on the other hand, we are deeply into clinical strategies and cost benefit analysis; we will clutch at any new straw if it might help to balance our wretched management budgets. The emphasis in the Pounder book is on the trendy - lasers, campylobacter, cancer and the elderly. The editorial input is much more ‘up front’, as clearly the content of the book is dictated by the choice of topics. This gives the book a feeling which is at the same time both more topical and more ephemeral. Here basic science is not spread, like butter, evenly throughout, but comes in discrete chunks (the peel in Frank Cooper’s Oxford marmalade?) with chapters on such matters as molecular genetics and colonic physiology, while one on veterinary gastroenterology also caters for the more adventurous moonlighter. An important feature is a helpful index to the year’s output of review articles, for which every registrar struggling to prepare a case for presentation should be truly grateful.

Both books suffer from indifferent prose; it isn’t easy to write a review of the literature which will keep the reader awake, but some of the authors don’t even seem to be trying. Try this as a sample: ‘Understanding constipation was once very simple, but that is no longer true, although treatment remains a problem.’

In the UK team, Ian Forgacs deserves commendation for bucking the trend towards verbal tedium, while, for the US, David Lieberman manages to convey the excitement of the new developments in endoscopy.

Which book? My penchant towards physiology and pathophysiology led me to predict that I would opt for the US volume, but in the event, I found the UK book a better guide to what seems to matter to us just now.

Why not both books? One answer is cost; these books appear every year, and they don’t get any cheaper. Probably the major determinant is time; people who don’t have time to follow the journals will be unlikely to have time to read both of these books or, for that matter, even one of them. Which would be a pity.

David Wingate


It is a pleasure to review a book which targets a particular audience and achieves just the right level of information for that readership. This book is aimed at senior medical undergraduates above all, and gives a remarkably complete overview of nutrition as seen from the viewpoint of a British medical school. Dr Pennington has contrived to combine effectively the practical and the theoretical, though throughout, the emphasis appropriately is on the practical. The book is in eight principle sections covering physiology and biochemistry, diet and nutritional requirements, malnutrition, enteral nutrition, parenteral nutrition, nutrition in disease, diet and disease and drugs and nutrition. Inevitably in a short book such as this, the style is didactic, but each chapter is adequately referenced. One area that I should have liked to have seen included was a section on dietary assessment, because it seems to me that medical students and doctors should understand the problems of the techniques used by their dietitian colleagues and therefore use such assessments with an appropriate knowledge of inherent inaccuracies. This would enable a more critical approach to publish dietary survey data. All in all this is a very good and useful introductory book to nutrition.

D J Powell-Tuck


This is a short, excellently illustrated book. It gives a very clear description of how to perform some of the commonly used therapeutic methods in gastrointestinal endoscopy.

Its American authors are well known as excellent lecturers and teachers on their topics and the material here is packaged so that it can be used readily for teaching and is published as an alternative format as a slide atlas of techniques of therapeutic endoscopy. Luckily, I was only sent the book format for review: I still feel guilty about using other people’s slides for teaching so I have escaped this temptation. The reproductions of endoscopic photographs are above average quality. The colour illustrations by Susan C Tilberry are of a clear comic strip quality: better than Beano and nearly as good as the best in Eagle.

The book covers therapy for gastrointestinal bleeding, sclerotherapy for varices, dilatation, prosthesis placement and thermal palliative treatment for GI cancer, percutaneous gastrostomy, endoscopic sphincterotomy and management of biliary tract obstruction and polypectomy. It is practical and