Reply

Sir,—The comments of Drs Colombel, Janin, and Torpier are of interest. We agree that the immediate processes which may contribute to the mucosal lesion of coeliac disease may be multifactorial. The eosinophil is a major component of the inflammatory infiltrate in coeliac disease, although this is frequently not emphasized in descriptions of the lesion. We have recently produced additional evidence that eosinophils and polymorphs are present in increased numbers in the coeliac mucosa: using monoclonal antibodies to Fc receptors (for the gamma chain of IgG) types II and III, which are found on eosinophils and polymorphs, a marked increase in reactive cells was found. The evidence of Dr Colombel and colleagues that many of these eosinophils have degenerated and the associated finding of increased release of granule components points to mechanisms whereby eosinophils might mediate damage. The possibility that IgA, produced in large quantities in the damaged intestine, may be involved in eosinophil degranulation through interaction with IgA Fc receptors should also be considered.

The finding that many coeliac patients react rapidly to dietary challenge (both symptomatically and histologically) is in keeping with more immediate mechanisms of damage also participating in the development of the lesion. Eosinophils are good candidates for such a mechanism.

CONLETH FEIGHGY
DONALD WEIR
ALEX WHelan
St.Jame's Hospital,
PO Box 569,
Dublin 8,
Ireland

Omeprazole in H2 blocker non-responders

Sir,—The results of the study by Delchier et al.1 on the similar effectiveness of omeprazole 20 mg man and ranitidine 150 mg twice daily in H2 receptor blocker non-responders are very interesting, but also the comments by Bate2 on this paper are important. We fully agree with Bate's opinion that a six week trial should be judged sufficient to define resistance to H2 blockers, because ulcer healing rates further increase by continuing therapy with these drugs to eight weeks.3 It must also be emphasized that the adoption of unstandardised definitions of ulcer refractoriness continues to generate confusion in this field and prevents a useful comparability of findings pertaining to different studies.

Even though Delchier and colleagues adopted patient selection criteria which may have greatly influenced their final results, it is worth pointing out that the reduced efficacy of omeprazole in their trial is a relevant factor in determining the lack of significant difference between this drug and ranitidine in healing resistant ulcers. As the authors discussed in their paper, the well known variability of individual response to single daily doses of omeprazole 20 mg4 may be the most reasonable explanation for the low efficacy of this dosage regimen in their study compared with the impressive one obtained in other trials which tested single daily doses of omeprazole 40 mg.5 Some of our recent data seem to sustain their supposition. We used 24 hour continuous pH-meter6 to study two patients with endoscopically proven duodenal ulcers on the fifth day of treatment with omeprazole 20 mg man. As reported in the Figure, the circadian profile of gastric acidity of both patients resulted poorly influenced by the drug. These findings show that the antisecretory effect of omeprazole 20 mg is very low in some subjects and the variability in acid suppression with this dosage can be even higher than previously reported.6 The reasons for this are at present unclear, but a derangement in the pharmacokinetic pathways of the drug might be involved.7 As regards patients' compliance, we could check daily drug intake because they were hospitalised.

On the basis of our data, it seems advisable to take into consideration the authors' suggestions that omeprazole 40 mg is probably the optimal dosage for treating H2 blocker non-responders and that 24 hour pH monitoring could be valid for verifying whether the clinically recommended dose of omeprazole 20 mg in duodenal ulcer disease,8 is really appropriate in individual patients.

V SAVARINO
O MELA*
A SUMBERAZ
G CELLE
IJSMA—Centro di Gastroenterologia
and Clinica Medica R Universita di Genova,
Italy


Figure: 24 hour gastric acidity profiles of two duodenal ulcer patients on the fifth day of treatment with omeprazole 20 mg man. (D= dinner, B= breakfast, L= lunch.)


Reply

Sir,—I read with interest the comments by Bate and Savarino et al on our paper. They both pointed out that duodenal ulcers cannot be regarded as truly 'resistant' after only six weeks of treatment with an H2 blocker. I do not fully agree with their opinion. In 1990, a duodenal ulcer remaining unhealed after six weeks of therapy should be considered 'refractory'. Indeed, the actual question is: What is the best strategy to accelerate ulcer healing? This is especially important in patients with persisting symptoms on/and at risk related to age, associated disease or drug concomitantly used. Our results and those of Tytgat et al clearly suggest that the adequate dosage of omeprazole is rather 40 mg than 20 mg. As recently outlined by Bardhan,8 another problem is to determine the adequate drug dosage that is effective in maintenance treatment once healing has been achieved in initially resistant patients. In this regard, results reported by Savarino et al suggest that 24 h gastric pHimetry could be helpful to select patients requiring maintenance treatment with high doses of omeprazole.

DELCHEIR
Université INSERM 99 et
Service d'Hépatogastroentérologie
Hôpital Edouard Herriot,
94010 CRETEIL, CEDEX, France


Epithelial dysplasia in Caroli’s disease

Sir,—We read with interest the report by Fozard et al of Caroli’s disease complicated by dysplasia of biliary epithelium in the absence of liver disease. We recently noted similar changes in a 60 year old man presenting with recurrent episodes of epigastric and right upper quadrant abdominal pain associated with jaundice, pruritis and anorexia that on counselling showed numerous calculi within the grossly dilated intrahepatic ductal system but no proximal stricture or obstruction, changes consistent with Caroli’s disease. A formal left hepatic lobectomy was performed. In the resected liver, parenchyma was largely replaced by dilated bile ducts containing...
numerous calcui and showing fibrous thickening of their walls. The ducts were lined by normal and mildly to severely dysplastic biliary epithelium. Severe dysplasia was characterized by cellular pleomorphism, stratified pleomorphism of the nuclei with prominent nucleoli, and a papillary surface (Figure). No invasive carcinoma was identified.

**Figure:** Severe dysplasia of epithelium in dilated bile duct.

Epithelial dysplasia is frequently seen adjacent to cholangiocarcinoma in the intra- and extrahepatic bile ducts and carcinoma of the gall bladder which has a similar epithelial lining. Extensive severe epithelial dysplasia involving the gall bladder, cystic duct, and common bile duct, associated with adenocarcinoma of the common hepatic duct, was recently reported in a patient with primary sclerosing cholangitis and chronic ulcerative colitis, diseases which, like Caroli’s disease, are associated with an increased risk of cholangiocarcinoma. These findings, and that of epithelial dysplasia unassociated with carcinoma in Caroli’s disease, provide evidence of the pre malignant nature of biliary epithelial dysplasia. Because such dysplasia is usually detected only in surgical specimens, we agree that early resection of localised forms of Caroli’s disease may be necessary to prevent late complication by cholangiocarcinoma.

**COMMON PROBLEMS IN GASTROINTESTINAL SURGERY**


2. Common problems in gastrointestinal surgery is one of a series produced by Year Book Medical Publishers on a variety of surgical subjects. The contribution in question is edited by Joseph Fischer, chairman of surgery at the University of Cincinnati. The approach is refreshing and novel. Each chapter is introduced by a specific clinical problem: four to eight line case history, one or more consultant is then asked to comment. Most contributors are pithy and to the point. Their comments usually consist of a brief overview of the literature, some reference to pathophysiology followed by the contributors own view on management. The book is largely, I suspect, designed to assist the private practitioner in North America to provide optimum clinical management based upon the views of experienced clinicians. The layout, diagrams and artwork are pleasing. Only key references are provided. The contributors: 66 in all are household names in GI circles, a few have retired from practice for a variable time but most are regarded as contemporary experts in their disciplines. Only three are not from the USA (two from the UK and one from Canada). The reader must therefore expect a US bias in the text.

Surprisingly the section on oesophageal and thoracic problems does not include any contribution on oesophageal carcinoma which some will find surprising with the development of endoscopic endoluminal ultrasonography, the growing recognition of early oesophageal cancer and the impact of low morbidity bypass, intubation and laser therapy on palliative therapy. I find it curious to come across two breast problems in the thoracic section.

The gastroduodenal section includes a single contribution on GI bleeding. The emphasis, as is prevalent throughout the book, is on surgical treatment without even reference to endoscopic assessment or the role of endoscopic therapy. The medical/surgical divide is a real one in North America and the concept of joint management is not one that flavours this book.

The hepatobiliary section is varied and interesting, but it is difficult to do justice to all that has occurred over the last decade in liver transplantation by reference to a single case report. The endocrine section makes interesting reading, but the gastrointestinal component of many case reports is enigmatic.

There is some unfortunate duplication in the colorectal section particularly with reference to diverticular disease and regional enteritis. The important clinical problem of major colonic haemorrhage takes no account of rapid blood replacement and therapeutic endoscopy or the impact of intraoperative panendoscopy on surgical strategy.

The book is a bold and attractive approach to a surgical update. In gastroenterology it must include joint management with gastroenterologists. The experiment has been a good one