younger than the American Gastroenterology Association, but his intellectual and literary skills remain undimmed. He has drawn on nearly 1500 references to create a vivid history of the specialty from colonial times onwards. In the mid-19th century, the astonishing and epic work of William Beaumont was the obvious stimulus for the creative explosion that followed in the late 19th and early 20th century, spearheaded by such pioneers as Cannon, Ivy, Carlson, and Alvarez. Thereafter, there was a lull until the emergence of new pioneers such as Ingelfinger, Davenport, Code, Grossman, and, of course, Kirsner himself. Recent decades have seen strong efforts by the leaders to fight for the funding and the future of the discipline, and in the appendices, Kirsner has included the proceedings of the sequence of meetings on 'Digestive Disease as a National Problem.' The author displays a nice blend of detachment and enthusiasm, giving credit where credit is due as in his account of the emergence of fibreoptic endoscopy; the only perceptible bias is occasional and understandable Chicagocentricity. His narrative style is never dull, and occasionally a dry wit shines through; of the presurgical management of acute appendicitis, he remarks: 'When physics of various sorts failed to produce results or made matters worse, quicksilver was given as a last resort, which it usually was just that.' From the vantage point of his seniority, he must reflect that we are constantly rediscovering the wheel, but it is probably underpinned by an optimistic belief that it gets rounder each time.

Who should read this book? Obviously anyone interested in the history of the subject, for the greater part of it is here. In particular, it should be read by gastroenterologists in other countries (including the United Kingdom) who have assumed positions of leadership. They will find that Americans take their work very seriously indeed, and have created a wealth of interlocking organisations that exist not only for the social purpose of regular meetings but also to strengthen education at all levels, to set standards of clinical care, and, not least, to nurture the scientific base of clinical research. One cannot but admire the energy that united the profession across a continent; in the age of the plane and the fax it is easy to forget that for most of the period covered by this book, travel and communication was by no means rapid. Digestive Disease Week did not happen by accident; it is the natural outcome of hard work, of which there is no better exponent or apologist than the author.

DAVID WINGATE

**Gastrointestinal cancer: radiation therapy.** Edited by Ralph R Dobelbower, Jr. (Pp 310; illustrated; DM220.) Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag. 1990.

This book on gastrointestinal cancer has the somewhat misleading subtitle of 'radiation therapy.' It is misleading because the various chapters are all extremely comprehensive. They usually cover aspects of anatomy, natural history, epidemiology, diagnostic workup, and staging, together with balanced reviews of surgical, chemotherapeutic, and combined modality treatments as well as radiotherapy. It therefore presents a very broad and indeed, unusually for a multiauthor review book, a surprisingly up to date account of gastrointestinal cancer.

The editors must have given clear guidelines to their authors as all the chapters simply conform to the same pattern, making both reading and random reference easy. Each chapter has an extensive and useful bibliography (referenced to 1987) and the illustrations are pertinent and clear. There is some idiosyncratic indexing, as, for example, a whole page for the rare biliary cancers as opposed to half a page for rectal cancer.

Introductory chapters in tumorigenesis, pathology, and radiology set a useful stage for the subsequent individual reviews of cancer in the oesophagus, stomach, pancreas, biliary tract, colon, rectum, and anus. The book concludes with chapters on medical management (chemotherapy) and the follow up of treated patients.

It is difficult to maintain an equally high standard in all chapters but none was found wanting by this reviewer. It then would be invidious to highlight any one. However, it is impressive that, for example, in the chapter on chemotherapy the current excitement about various new techniques in colorectal cancer – adjuvant intra-arterial hepatic infusion, use of folinic acid as a modulation of 5-fluorouracil, and adjuvant levamisole with 5-fluorouracil all are mentioned – anticipating the more definitive data more recently available.

This is an impressive book both for reading and for reference. It is a pleasure to recommend it with complete enthusiasm.

NORMAN M BLEEHAN

**Imaging of the liver, pancreas and spleen.** Edited by R A Wilkins and H B Nunnerley. (Pp 557; illustrated; £110.) Oxford: Royal College of Radiographers and Blackwell Scientific Publications, 1990.

Major advances have taken place in recent years in the radiological investigation of the solid organs of the digestive system. Angiography, radionucleide imaging, and ultrasound are techniques that have been available for some time, but have now become refined and are now widely available. Computed tomography, direct methods of cholangiography and pancreatography, and magnetic resonance imaging are more recent developments that are in fairly widespread clinical practice. All these techniques now play a major part in the diagnosis and management of disorders of the liver, bile ducts, pancreas, and spleen, and this book is a timely addition to the literature on imaging of the digestive system.

*Imaging of the Liver, Pancreas and Spleen* is edited by Robert Wilkins and Heather Nunnerley, and has contributions from 31 leading experts in the field. The authors have succeeded in producing a comprehensive, well referenced text with a large number of excellent illustrations. Normal anatomy, the methods of investigation, and disorders that involve the liver, biliary system, pancreas, and spleen are dealt with. Some overlap is inevitable in a book with so many contributors, but the editors have done an excellent job. It occurs in the description of techniques such as percutaneous transhepatic cholangiography and endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography (ERCP).

As I read through the chapter on obstructive jaundice, I was surprised to see a statement that ERCP can be performed on an outpatient basis. In the section on the gall bladder, it is incorrectly stated that sodium ipodate is given in a dose of six 3 g capsules, instead of six 500 mg capsules. The calcified or porcelain gall bladder, although an uncommon condition, deserves more attention than one or two sentences. As computed tomography plays a major part in the detection and diagnosis of carcinoma of the pancreas, I think that its role in pancreatic cancer receives less attention than it should.

These are only minor criticisms of an excellent book that should prove to be a useful source of reference for radiologists and clinicians involved in the management of patients with suspected or known disorders of the solid organs of the digestive system.

D NOLAN

**Progress in liver diseases.** Vol IX. Edited by H Popper and F Schaffner. (Pp 750; illustrated; $110.) Philadelphia: W B Saunders, 1990.

In 1961 Hans Popper and Fenton Schaffner, working at the Mount Sinai Hospital in New York, later to be the Mount Sinai School of Medicine of the City University of New York, inaugurated the 'Progress in Liver Disease' series of monographs. They were the editors and their friends the contributors. The volumes rapidly became the most original and innovative books on liver disease in the world. No serious hepatologist could afford to be without them. Over the years eight volumes have appeared and now the ninth, which fully maintains the high standards of its predecessors. Sadly, it is published without the personal supervision of the senior editor, Hans Popper, who was the father of modern hepatology and who died in 1988. In this volume Dr Popper's memory is perpetuated by Fenton Schaffner, his loyal co-editor, and by 75 contributors. In such a feast of hepatology it is difficult to select particular topics. They include a full discussion of hepatitis C and E viruses and of liver transplantation. Basic topics such as liver gene expression, eicosanoids, hepatic calcium metabolism, and bilirubin glucuronidation are included.

The presentation is excellent. The illustrations are prolific and clear. The price is reasonable given the breadth of material included and the size of the book. This ninth *Progress in Liver Diseases* will become a collector's item, referred to well into the 21st century, when other monographs of liver disease are long forgotten.

SHEILA SHERLOCK

# NOTES

### Course for radiologists

The Leeds Gastroenterology Course for Radiologists, 1–5 July 1991, will be held at St James's University Hospital, Leeds, England. Information: Miss Pat Kentley, Level 7, Worsley Medical Building, University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT, England. Tel 0532 431751.

### 6th World Congress in Ultrasound

The 6th World Congress in Ultrasound will be held in Copenhagen, from 1–6 September 1991. Congress secretariat: 6th World Congress in Ultrasound, Spadille Congress Service, Sommervej 3, DK-3100 Hornbæk, Denmark.