

four concern the use of probiotics in, respectively, chickens, pigs, ruminants, and humans. The final chapter is on problems and future prospects.

In my opinion, probiotics are likely to be of growing importance because of their potential value in disease prevention. The subject has a bad image, and needs good scientific presentations to establish its credibility. This book is a good start and should be read by all those who are in favour of preventive medicine.

M HILL

Food intolerance. By M H Lessof. (Pp 212; illustrated; £39.95.) London: Chapman and Hall, 1992.

Doctors are not really the main target for this book. Indeed, there is a glossary that explains such basic terms as hypoglycaemia and pruritus. It is one of a series designed to present matters of food safety to scientists and technologists in the food industry and for this reason the medical aspects are of necessity over simplified. In particular, the accounts of coeliac disease and the irritable bowel syndrome are inadequate to stretch the attention of practising gastroenterologists.

Many members of the medical profession, however, will benefit by reading this straightforward, well written, and well balanced introduction to the vexed problem of food intolerance. Professor Lessof is an acknowledged expert in this field and was chairman of the Joint Committee on Food Intolerance and Food Aversion set up by the Royal College of Physicians, and the British Nutrition Foundation in 1984 which produced a much praised report.

Many doctors are misled by the popular term 'food allergy' and expect all harmful reactions to food to be as straightforward as a case of hay fever. Professor Lessof charts his way skilfully through such matters as enzyme deficiencies, abnormal bacterial fermentation, chronic hyperventilation, and psychological disorders, which are of key importance in this complex field. The practitioner who has read this book will be able to deal more confidently and sympathetically with patients in whom the possibility of food intolerance arises.

The book would seem to be overpriced at £39.95 for 200 pages and unfortunately the index leaves a lot to be desired. Those who wish to be abreast of the topic of food intolerance, however, which will undoubtedly prove of increasing importance to gastroenterologists in years to come will find it an excellent introduction.

JO HUNTER

Gastroenterology in practice. By I G Barrison, M G Anderson, P B McIntyre. (Pp 113; illustrated; £29.95.) London: Gower Medical Publishing, 1992.

The National Health Service reforms, publications such as *Health of the nation* and, most recently, the Tomlinson Report on London's health services have emphasised the increasing importance of clinical care in general practice. To meet the challenges of the 1990s general practitioners clearly need to ensure that their clinical skills are maximised and kept up to date and that delivery of health care is optimised. The purchaser-provider arrangements, the development of medical audit, the introduction of management protocols and guidelines, and the increasing importance of clinical care

shared between general practice and the hospital all have clear implications for continuing medical education and professional behavioural change. Postgraduate education for general practitioners has to take these requirements into account and to provide both information and stimulation to ensure appropriate service development.

Gastroenterology in practice is a short textbook of gastroenterology written by three district general hospital consultants aimed at a 'reappraisal of the family practitioner's clinical approach to patients with gastrointestinal problems'. The book is elegantly produced, copiously illustrated with photographic and graphical material, and liberally sprinkled with boxes of key points from the text. The overall appearance is unfortunately rather reminiscent of much of the material contained in unsolicited publications for general practitioners and a series of 10 important disease areas are treated in an entirely traditional, textbook fashion, and at a level which seems more appropriate to final year clinical students than to postgraduate general practitioners.

The reality is that our patients do not present with a neat diagnosis of gastro-oesophageal reflux disease or colorectal cancer, but come with ill defined and often confusing symptoms that might, at one extreme represent nothing more than the results of dietary indiscretion and, at the other, indicate serious or life threatening disease. The everyday problems of sorting out the trivial from the serious, of making management decisions under conditions of uncertainty, and of using time as a diagnostic tool are not answered in a useful way in this book. There could be much more discussion about the selection of patients requiring investigation, the choice of investigations available to general practitioners, the important issue of access to these investigations, and the indications for specialist referral. There is, however, plenty of good and well presented information about major gastrointestinal conditions, which together make up about 10% of clinical work in general practice, and recommendations for treatment are generally up to date and appropriate. The text is clearly written and a pleasure to read, and the information is well presented and attractively laid out. The pagination is rather curious, requiring of the reader no familiarity with integers greater than 16.

Although an attractive addition to the surgery bookshelf, I am not sure whether this publication will succeed in its aim of encouraging general practitioners to reappraise their clinical management of gastrointestinal disorders. It will certainly help them to brush up on basic medical and surgical knowledge, but may not have much impact on overall patient care.

ROGER JONES

Digestive system physiology. By Paul A Sanford. (Pp 251; illustrated; £19.95.) London: Edward Arnold, 1992.

At a time when medical schools the length and breadth of Britain are grappling with ways to implement the General Medical Council's request for greater integration of preclinical and clinical science it seems a little strange to be reviewing a book in which the two are divorced. *Digestive system physiology* is published as part of the *Physiological principles of medicine series* in which clinical aspects are dealt with in a separate, though, complementary volume. The aim of this volume is to provide

students of medicine with a comprehensive understanding of gastrointestinal physiology, the better to appreciate the significance of disordered function. In the absence of clinical relevance, however, the medical student may find the treatment a little dry.

There is no doubt that in the 10 years since the first edition of this volume there has been enormous increase in our understanding of gut function. The increase in size of this publication reflects this growth but the depth of coverage is unbalanced and, as the author points out in the preface, 'behind the times'. He is obviously most comfortable with small intestinal absorption. Swallowing, gastric emptying, the secretion of saliva, gastric juice, bile, and that of the exocrine pancreas together only occupy a similar number of pages. I feel the author has failed to grasp the nettle in terms of what is relevant to the medical student. The bibliography after each chapter contains some bizarre inclusions that do not reflect the chapter content nor are they a route into the published works. All in all this is not a book I can strongly recommend.

D GRUNDY

Annual of gastrointestinal endoscopy 1992. By P B Cotton, G N J Tytgat, C B Williams. (Pp 183; illustrated; £60.) London: Current Science, 1992.

This Annual represents the fifth in a series in which illustrious editors collate important reviews and commentaries discussing the latest developments in gastrointestinal endoscopy. These reviews are compiled by important contributors to the world publications in the field. Selections of important papers from the previous years' published works are reviewed and categorised with regard to their importance, each selected paper carrying a short annotation. As in previous years, the Annual is well produced and beautifully illustrated. This year, topics covered include: risk management for endoscopists; endoscopy of upper gastrointestinal bleeding; lasers and tumour probes; enteroscopy; endoscopic ultrasonography, as well as more general reviews on aspects of organ specific endoscopy.

This is an important book that should prove useful to every clinician with an interest in endoscopy, whatever their speciality. It provides a unique opportunity to update knowledge and enjoy the views of renowned specialists on evolving topics in endoscopy. It is well organised, and eminently readable; it should be within reach of every trainee in gastroenterology either in the clinical department or postgraduate library. Sadly its published price of £60 means that it is unlikely to be on the personal bookshelves of many trainees.

CH J SWAN

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