Gastrointestinal Endoscopy – Basic Principles and Practice. By J Baillie. 

This slim book is written primarily for trainees in endoscopy to ‘fill some of the gaps found in all training programmes’. In this, it undoubtably succeeds though whether it will appeal to the wider audience hoped for by the author is in doubt. John Baillie’s friendly, avuncular writing style makes it almost a joy to read for the most part, although wordy at times. The general layout is very similar to that of the major competitor in the field, Cotton and Williams. There are sections on endoscopes, endoscopy, sedation, cholangiopancreatography. There are helpful hints in many areas, written with humour and obviously much experience of the problems encountered by trainees. Some of them would be of help also to the more experienced physicians. Trainees at varying stages of maturity to whom I have shown the book commented that the initial section seems suitable for those who have never seen an endoscope or an endoscopy unit but, thereafter, rapidly becomes redundant. This is perhaps inevitable in a book that intends to be comprehensive for beginners. Similar comments were made about parts of the upper gastrointestinal section. The colonoscopy section describes techniques, such as entering the ileocecal valve that I cannot make work in practice. The book is illustrated by rather obscure diagrams, which hinder rather than help. Sadly the whole enterprise is weakened by poor photographs, some of which were so dark in my copy as to be almost useless. The quality of the diagrams is also disappointing. Illustrations are an important part of any guide such as this and their poor quality is a serious problem. The major rival in this market – Cotton and Williams – has had the benefit of revision through previous editions and was preferred by all the trainees who had seen both. I am sure that John Baillie’s book would improve in subsequent iterations, and I hope that it will sell enough in the face of the competition to justify a second go.

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This is a timely contribution to a rapidly developing field – indeed, the field in many areas has already left some of the chapters looking rather elderly. The book begins with detailed reviews of the neuromodulation of gastrointestinal immune and inflammatory responses and the immune modulation of epithelial function and of motor activity. The function of neutrophils and mast cells in an inflammatory response is well covered. Lymphocyte and monocyte functions and their control are not discussed as such but they are covered to a degree by an excellent review on cytokines – it is inevitable that at least three more interleukins have been described since it was written. The reviews of eicosanoids, nitric oxide, and platelet activation factor are good. Perhaps the only slight disappointment was the final chapter on the effects of glucocorticoids on gastrointestinal inflammation as it fails to go beyond rather than be devoted to surgical aspects only. Such recruitment will strengthen the weaker areas.

These general comments must not detract from the immense worth of these two volumes (they weigh 16 lb!). Not only are they well researched and referenced but they are also pleasingly written with good illustrations and detailed index. Of particular value are the chapters on functional problems and the surgical techniques for inflammatory bowel disease. The postscript on laparoscopic techniques is also excellent with its cautionary critique.

There is no doubt that these volumes will be used by many in this country and overseas and greatly assist in the promotion of coloproctology as a specialty. The authors deserve congratulations and it is to be hoped that they will be rewarded in its sales. They have laid an excellent foundation for the future.

J P S THOMSON

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NOTES

European venture

The North of England Gastroenterology Society has created a European Venture Fund through donations from industry to support younger members presenting original work at European meetings. Three travelling fellowships were awarded in 1993 to Dr Mark Cotterill of Leigh Infirmary, Mr Thomas Wright of the Royal Liverpool Hospital, and Miss Tasmin Greenwell of the Northern General Hospital. Their work was well received and stimulated much discussion. The Society plans to continue to support its younger members in this way.

Corrections

An error occurred in this paper by Dr Bart Maes et al (Gut 1994; 35: 333–7). The symbols in Figure 2 should have been e = after erythromycin, r = normal, Δ = after panethamine.

An editorial error occurred in this paper by Dr Bjorn Østensen et al (Gut 1994; 35: 382–70). The fourteenth line in the abstract should have read peripheral blood lymphocytes (not lamina propria lymphocytes).