Research issues are succinctly covered in the book. For example, how to do proper survey research is discussed in one chapter, and another reviews psychometric testing and how to interpret it. Current terminology applied in the functional gastrointestinal disorders is presented in an understandable yet up-to-date fashion. Definitions are important because they have been widely disparate until recently (although the Rome criteria for diagnosis of the functional gastrointestinal syndromes, which are presented in the book, have brought a semblance of order to the field even if most of the diagnostic criteria will inevitably change).

There are a few important limitations. The new science of gut visceral sensory disturbances and pathophysiological mechanisms in general are not covered in the book. In a handbook such as this, more detailed integration with the basic sciences would have represented a valuable and, in my view, vital addition. Overlap among the treatment sections with most identical discussions of the same drugs is an unnecessary burden which should have been avoided.

This is a good book with messages for both clinicians and researchers. I would recommend this text to all gastroenterologists with a special interest in the functional gastrointestinal disorders obtain a copy. It should be in gastroenterology libraries everywhere. Gastroenterology trainees should read it to prepare them for real-life gastrointestinal practice. I hope there will be further editions as knowledge progresses.

N J TALLEY


There are many clinical problems that gastroenterologists deal with on a daily basis. It is not easy to find a single text that helps to tackle these issues. Clinical Challenges in Gastroenterology aims to fill this role. It follows the usual format with a section on basic HLA, followed by disease associations. At the moment, there are plenty of associations, but no real mechanisms are understood. However, genetic susceptibility to diseases of the gut and liver is an extremely exciting area and I am sure there will be much more data in the next few years.

Overall, this is a worthwhile text, but I would buy it to learn about the liver rather than the gut.

I FORGACS


Published conference proceedings (along with published abstracts) make up the fag-end of scientific communication. Acceptable new data are never included (it would prejudice publication in a peer review journal), virtually nobody reads them and the work is rarely quoted. They are the scientific version of vanity publishing. Almost invariably the product of a meeting, they represent collections of manuscripts extracted from participants (usually unwillingly) in return for a few days in a first-class hotel at an exotic resort, business class air travel, and a chance to lie around the pool and play some golf. Unsurprisingly, their content is often rather pathetic. This book is a compilation of the work of the major speakers at the 8th International Congress for Mucosal Immunology, held in San Diego (nice climate, good golf) in July 1995. This reviewer was on the program committee, but I missed the last minute in an unsuccessful attempt to pursue another career opportunity. Having read this book, there is no doubt that my time would have been better spent in San Diego. In contrast to all I have said above, Marty Kagnoff and Hiro Kiyono have put together an excellent book on mucosal immunology. Fortunately, it is not a conference proceedings but a series of authoritative (mostly) pieces on all aspects of mucosal immunity. The chapters on inflammatory bowel disease, Helicobacter pylori, and liver disease but there is no doubt that this book focuses more on basic mechanisms than clinical disciplines. The contributors of the 40 chapters are eminent, and by and large they have done a good job. There are quite a number of good figures and tables to break up the text. Forty chapters into just under 600 pages means that individual chapters are often not very long; however, this has turned out to be an advantage as most contributors have focused on details of experiments, rather than the usual turgid "background" and "conclusion". There is little repetition. The book is divided into six major sections on...