

Gut

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it may have more limited appeal for the more experienced gastroenterologist.

The second half of volume two is also unusual, being devoted to diagnostic and therapeutic procedures including endoscopy, imaging, mucosal biopsy, microbiology, and motility studies. Once again of particular appeal to the younger postgraduate.

Sandwiched between these sections on basic mechanisms, symptoms, and diagnostic and therapeutic approaches are some 60 chapters devoted to diseases as they are manifested sequentially along the gastrointestinal tract.

These contributions are all a pleasure to read and are uniformly well presented and illustrated. The presentations of a consistently high quality and the apparently seamless links from one chapter to the next provide remarkable continuity – a major editorial achievement.

Chapters are extensively referenced. For the next edition reference pruning and selection of more recent references would enhance the book's value. For example, a chapter on inflammatory bowel disease includes references for cyclosporin no later than 1989 and the most recent reference cited in the section on cancer and colitis is 1981.

There are some chapters which are a model of clarity. For example, the chapter on tumours of the small intestine is well written and illustrated with excellent radiographs, histology and summary tables.

For improving postgraduate education the two volume set is now available on CD-ROM which, together with an atlas of gastroenterology, is linked with a self assessment review and guidelines which further increases its value in postgraduate training. For the third edition, I would be inclined to shorten the diagnostic and therapeutic section and to use the space to increase the depth of coverage in the section on specific diseases.

I can no longer claim to be a young gastroenterologist myself, but all the young gastroenterologists in our department have purchased a copy from the wide selection of textbooks on gastroenterology that are now available. In my view this is where this remarkable book makes its major impact. If only sitting on this two volume set was enough to imbibe the information, rather than having to read it!

ROBERT ALLEN

Hepatology: A Textbook of Liver Disease. Volumes 1 and 2. 3rd edn. Boyer Z, ed. (Pp 1970; illustrated; £225.00.) Harcourt Brace. 1996. ISBN 0-7216-4836-3.

This very substantial two volume textbook contains over 1900 pages, 68 chapters and over 400 references per chapter (maximum number 834 on receptor mediated endocytosis). It contains 1328 illustrations which are predominantly in black and white. The index contains over 7700 entries. The 105 contributors are overwhelmingly drawn from the USA, with less than 10% coming from Europe and none based in the UK.

What do these facts tell us about this book? The answer lies in our expectations. For many, textbooks of this size are handsome tomes that adorn the office and are used for reference purposes on an occasional basis. When used in this way, the expectation is that

the information required will be found quickly and easily. In that respect this textbook is excellent, covering many fringe issues not included in other major textbooks of hepatology and having a reasonably comprehensive indexing system. There is a great danger that this reference function will become relevant only to historical material as computer based information technology services become the preferred means for acquiring up to date material.

As a cover to cover read, I would prefer to tackle *Finnegan's Wake* and *War and Peace* in a single weekend. The detail and presentation are daunting, and equal measures of high scholarly ambition and stamina are needed for the task. The editors have strived to balance basic science and clinical hepatology, and to give greater emphasis to the pathophysiology of clinical disease. In doing so, they may have unwittingly produced two textbooks that will appeal to substantially different audiences. I suspect I will have retired from hepatology for many years before I am overwhelmed by the temptation to read 28 pages on Vitamin A metabolism!

It is as a guide to day to day clinical practice that this textbook is least attractive. The bulk is prohibitive and the layout is not conducive to assisting in the management of clinical problems and dilemmas. The US near-monopoly of authorship detracts from the balance of the clinical chapters, but this may have been considered to be an unavoidable marketing strategy. The winds of change that liver transplantation is blowing through the practice of hepatology is not reflected in this textbook, with transplantation issues getting neither the degree of integration nor the scope that they deserve.

The third edition of any book is often the best. It is still sufficiently close to the first publication to be fresh and true to its objectives, and yet mature enough to have learned from its mistakes. That is probably true of Boyer's *Hepatology*. It is also probably the best of its kind. It will continue to sit on my shelf for some time to come.

J O'GRADY

Operative Laparoscopy and Thoracoscopy. Bruce V MacFayden, Jeffery L Ponsky, eds. (Pp 768; illustrated; £180.25.) Philadelphia: Lippincott-Raven. 1996. ISBN 0-7817-0279-8.

This is a comprehensive book with detailed description of just about every minimal access surgical procedure so far conceived. It has a very strong North American bias which is particularly evident in the opening section with regard to training, accreditation and economic considerations. The book is divided into further sections essentially by organ. Most of the chapters are written in the "how I do it" fashion with lots of technical details. There is quite a bit of variation, though, in the introductions and discussions relating to these procedures. In any large book there are bound to be some contentious points. For instance, the interesting chapter on laparoscopic pancreaticoduodenectomy includes advice that percutaneous biopsy should be performed along with a mesenteric angiogram. Many surgeons would argue against the use of both of these techniques in patients with a resectable pancreatic tumour.

For such an expensive book there are far too many typographical errors. The editorial hand is generally weak. Not all of the intra-operative photographs are of textbook quality. There is a lot of anatomical repetition, particularly in the chapters on hernias, and for me, the balance of the book is not right. Eight chapters are devoted to gallstone surgery and three to groin hernias but only one to anti-reflux surgery. There is no mention in the chapter on colon resections of tumour implantation and port site recurrence. The repair of perforated peptic ulcer by omental patching and fibrin glue is not included, nor is the performance of splenectomy by the lateral approach. With one or two notable exceptions, most of the authors have relied on anecdotal rather than published evidence. I am not quite sure who this book is aimed at. It lacks much of the objectivity necessary for the surgical trainee to place minimal access procedures in their correct context. Conversely, the practising surgeon may find large parts of this book irrelevant. Although I personally enjoyed reading many of the chapters, at £180 this book is too expensive for the trainee and does not represent much value for money for the consultant.

D ALDERSON

NOTES

Laparoscopic Surgery

The European Course on Laparoscopic Surgery will be held at University Hospital Saint-Pierre (U.L.B.), Brussels, Belgium, on 13–16 May 1997 (French) and again on 18–21 November 1997 (English). Further information from: Administrative Secretariat, Conference Services s.a., Avenue de l'Observatoire, 3 bte 17, B-1180 Brussels, Belgium. Tel: +32 2 375 16 48; Fax: +32 2 375 32 99.

Clinical Nutrition and Metabolism

The 19th ESPEN Congress on Clinical Nutrition and Metabolism will be held at the RAI Congress Centre, Amsterdam, The Netherlands, on 31 August–3 September 1997. Further information from: Van Namen & Westerlaken Congress Organisation Services, PO Box 1558, 6501 BN Nijmegen, The Netherlands. Tel: +31 24 323 4471; Fax: +31 24 360 1159.

Digestive Endoscopy

A Course in Digestive Endoscopy will be held at the Academic Medical Centre, University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands, on 4–5 September 1997. Further information from: Helma Stockmann, Managing Director, European Postgraduate Gastro-Surgical School, G-4-zuid, Academic Medical Centre, Meibergdreef 9, 1105 AZ Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Tel: +31 20 566 3926; Fax: +31 20 691 4858.

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Gut publishes original papers, short rapid communications, leading articles, and reviews concerned with all aspects of the scientific basis of diseases of the alimentary tract, liver, and pancreas. Case reports will only be accepted if of exceptional merit. Letters related to articles published in *Gut* or with topics of general professional interest are welcomed. Authors should include the names and addresses of four experts whom the authors consider suitable to peer review their work.

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SI UNITS All measurements except blood pressure are expressed in SI units. In tables and illustrations values are given in SI units. For general guidance on the International System of Units and some useful conversion factors, see *The SI for Health Professions* (WHO,

1977). NB: Such conversion is the responsibility of the author.

REFERENCES These follow the Vancouver system - that is, references numbered consecutively in the text and listed numerically with journal titles abbreviated in the style of *Index Medicus, Standard journal article*. List up to six authors, then add *et al*.

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