

Gastroenterology. An integrated course 3rd ed. By I E Gillespie and T J Thomson. (Pp. 337; illustrated; £6.95.) Edinburgh: Churchill Livingstone, 1983.

This, in the editor's words, is a companion guide and text for medical students, and it covers liver, pancreatic and biliary disease as well as tube gastroenterology. It is a multi-author book (26) and as virtually half the authors are surgeons, a surgical bias is perceptible. The book is tidily constructed with good general coverage and a sensible approach although there is still room for improvement. Even after three editions, some of the writing could be tighter – do clinical students really need to be told that 'the function of the oesophagus is to transport food and drink from the mouth to the stomach'; and could not 'a sample of blood should be taken to determine whether there is any evidence of anaemia or elevation of the ESR' be put more briefly?

More importantly, one searches in vain for coherent sections on the banes of gastroenterologists lives, non-ulcer dyspepsia and the irritable bowel syndrome, and ileal resection diarrhoea does not get a mention. Management or investigation plans could be amplified (chronic diarrhoea and obstructive jaundice, for instance) and some general statements look a little odd; fiberoptic oesophagoscopy procedures seem underrated; not all sore throats need antibiotics; do physicians really pass nasogastric tubes in patients with Mallory Weiss syndrome, and what discriminant value do occult bloods have in peptic ulcer? Cyanocobalamin is out of date; what about hydroxylated vitamin D derivatives; and there are other peripheral opiate agonists besides codeine phosphate.

A good book nevertheless, nicely conceived, and can be recommended; but a fourth edition could be better.

M J S LANGMAN

Gastrointestinal physiology – the essentials 2nd ed. By Thomas J Sernkà and Eugene D Jacobson. (Pp. 174; illustrated; price not stated.) Baltimore USA: Williams & Wilkins, 1983.

As in many books limited by the availability of space, several difficult concepts and a great deal of standard material have been clearly and interestingly presented. There are areas of the subject, however, that receive less attention leaving the average student with a superficial coverage and the questioning reader irritated. For the latter there is a useful list for further reading of recent articles and a series of challenging questions.

Among those topics particularly well presented are the concepts of the mucosal cell membranes and their permeability, various transport processes, gastrointestinal blood flow, and the intrinsic and extrinsic nerves in the control of motility. The authors remind their readers of the non-uniformity of hepatocyte function and the enormous reserve capacity of the small intestine. On several occasions examples are described where an alteration of one process results in the modification of a whole range of gastrointestinal functions so that the student is obliged not to consider events in isolation. An overview at the end of the textbook will prove useful for many readers.

On the debit side the quality and scarcity of diagrams is disappointing. Page after page is uninterrupted by tables or figures, particularly in the early sections – for example, when the difficult subject of motility is considered, and well presented for the experienced gastroenterologist, the undergraduate may well struggle. It is a pity that the authors decided not to discuss some of the controversial topics or at least guide their readers towards them. Nevertheless many will find this book a welcome addition on their shelves.

P A SANFORD

The liver annual 3/1983 Edited by I M Arias, M Frenkel, and J H P Wilson. (Pp. 471; illustrated; \$60.00.) Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1983.

This *Annual*, now in its third year, has established itself as a valuable tool to keep hepatologists *au fait* with current thinking – at least up to 1982. The authors are carefully chosen and the standard is on the whole high. The book has become more international, eight countries being represented among the authors. The more interesting critical surveys include that of Charles S Lieber, writing on alcohol and the liver, and Serge Erlinger on biliary physiology and disease. The chapter by J H P Wilson includes a most helpful table of hepatic drug reactions reported in the literature and another one on the effect of liver disease on drug distribution and clearance.

It would take a stronger minded reviewer than myself to read every page as it is certainly heavy going – only 10 of the 17 critical surveys being enlivened by figures. It also seems overweighed by references provided from the Excerpta Medica Database. Surely some of the older ones could be omitted in what is intended to be an annual review of the major developments in liver related research.

SHEILA SHERLOCK