

It is also concerned with the role of food in the genesis of some of the digestive diseases. There is now an extensive literature on food factors in relation to gall stones, certain liver diseases, Crohn's disease and to cancers of the alimentary tract; already a number of tentative conclusions have been reached and these are critically reviewed and assessed. The special interest of the authors in functional bowel disorders and its relation to food is well covered in the sections on allergy, pseudo-allergy and pharmacologically active peptides, either present in food or produced during digestion. The personal experience of the authors in relation to the irritable bowel syndrome is recorded but their excellent results from exclusion diets await confirmation as it is a condition in which significant regional differences could well exist. The rapidly increasing interest in nutritional assessment in hospital practice is covered together with a detailed commentary on parenteral feeding but there is insufficient reference to enteral feeding. An increasingly active interest is being taken by many gastroenterologists in clinical nutrition and indeed the title of some departments has been changed to Department of Gastroenterology and Nutrition. This informative book will encourage this trend and should be in every departmental library.

FRANCIS AVERY JONES

Polypoid disease of the colon: emphasis on radiologic evaluation Edited by D J Ott and W C Wu. (Pp. 202; illustrated; £42). Baltimore-Munich: Urban & Schwarzenberg, 1986.

Colorectal polyps, their detection and management, is a topical subject. In this book the authors seek to review the subject, primarily for radiologists, by providing a background of the pathological, clinical, endoscopic, and surgical aspects, with emphasis given to radiological techniques, diagnosis, and an audit of efficacy.

As the book has seven authors, some overlap of information is to be expected; the definition and classification of polyps proving somewhat irresistible. The radiological chapters on technique, diagnosis and efficacy are authoritatively written, clear, and well illustrated. They provide a much more detailed account than would be found in a general textbook of radiology.

The chapter on the pathology of colorectal polyps quotes widely from the work of Morson, but in keeping with American practice talks about carcinoma *in situ*, which may cause confusion to British readers, and does not help clarify the concept of a 'malignant polyp'. It is surprising that this is not discussed in greater detail, and there is only a brief paragraph on its endoscopic implications in the

chapter on endoscopic evaluation. Staging of colorectal malignancy is not discussed and there is no mention of the Dukes' or Astler-Coller systems, which are central to an understanding of the management of neoplasia.

The book should be judged on how it integrates all the general pathological and clinical information about polyps for the radiologist, however, who is the intended reader, rather than whether it provides sufficient detail for everyone. In this regard it succeeds, especially from an American viewpoint. I would have preferred a more definite commitment to the single stage double contrast barium enema, but the arguments have been fairly put. It is a useful and readable work, providing a practical insight and is recommended for departmental libraries.

C I BARTRUM

Nutrition, aging, and health By Eleanor A. Young (Pp. 292; illustrated; £42) New York: Alan R Liss, 1986.

I found this a difficult book to enjoy. I am uncertain at which market the book is aimed. There are 10 chapters on too wide a range of subjects grouped under the general heading – 'Nutrition, aging, and health'. I felt in many cases that this relationship was rather contrived without a strong central theme. There are some sections which may be of interest to geriatricians, but few I feel, which will be relevant to general physicians and gastroenterologists. The text is littered with unproven statements and unqualified references of the value of various therapies.

The opening chapter on nutrition and physiology of aging, does not distinguish between the physiology of fit elderly and sick elderly subjects. Herein lies the 'age old' problem in gerontological research. Further there is no discussion on the misleading comparison of cross sectional and longitudinal data. Finally, no mention is made on the contribution that fitness makes to physiological change.

There is a good chapter on assessing the nutritional status of the elderly, although caution must be exercised in transposing American data to United Kingdom subjects. The section on nutritional requirements gets bogged down with details of individual vitamins without tackling the largely psychosocial reasons for poor intake. The aged gastrointestinal tract is well dealt with although I would have liked to have read more on hepatic metabolism. There are interesting sections on immunology and diabetes, but I was bewildered by mineral metabolism. The final chapter deals with the role of nutritional support for the elderly patient. Unfortunately, the key issue is again ducked. Is malnutrition a primary risk factor or merely a marker of ill-health? No evidence is

mounted that nutritional supplements are of clinical benefit and no clear guidelines are given as to which patients should be selected.

Overall, I found this book expensive and disappointing. I doubt whether geriatricians or readers of *Gut* will place it in their library.

JOHN R CROKER

Vascular disease of the gut. Edited by A Marston (Pp. 186; illustrated; £42.50). London: Arnold, 1986.

This book is more than an expansion of the highly acclaimed *Intestinal ischaemia* which was published in 1977. Mr Marston has invited colleagues in the United Kingdom, Ireland, Sweden, and the United States of America, to join him in producing what is essentially a new book. Many of the qualities, for which *Intestinal ischaemia* was commended, have been retained. The reader is provided, in a slim volume, with a survey of current knowledge in this subject. Illustrations and diagrams are well chosen and, on the whole, lucidly drawn. Mr Marston writes of vascular diseases of the intestine and for his cautious, measured approach to their surgical treatment. Of particular value is the last chapter in which he summarises current views on intestinal vascular disease and the implications for clinical practice.

All too frequently in the past, clinicians have been rather dismissive and simplistic towards vascular disease of the intestine. The view has been that very little could be done for patients with acute intestinal ischaemia, because the catastrophe carried a high mortality: surgery was confined to extensive, and perhaps repeated, resection of gangrenous bowel. There was little opportunity for removing the vascular occlusion by arterial surgery, other than, on occasion, by mesenteric embolectomy. Chronic intestinal ischaemia was viewed as rare: its precise diagnosis was difficult, and the evidence, that surgery was of any benefit, sparse. This book shows that such simplistic views are no longer tenable.

Research into the mesenteric vascular system has produced a large volume of interesting and important knowledge, but unfortunately a gap still remains between these studies and their clinical application. It will repay the clinician to read carefully the chapters on the regulation and distribution of intestinal flow, and particularly the laboratory studies of intestinal ischaemia and tests of intestinal viability.

The chapters on acute and chronic intestinal ischaemia are especially valuable to the clinician. Professor Moossa and his colleagues describe the treatment of superior mesenteric arterial embolus quite properly in some detail, for it is in this territory that a surgeon can improve results. The chapter on

chronic intestinal ischaemia has been written by Mr Marston, whose experience is considerable, if not unique. His conclusions should be read not only by surgeons interested in the treatment of intestinal ischaemia, but also by all enthusiasts who believe that they have discovered a new explanation for, or treatment of, vague abdominal complaints.

There is very little to criticise. Although the chapter on pseudomembranous colitis has been very well written by Keighley and Burden, the reasons for its inclusion in this book are not entirely clear. The radiographs reproduced in the first chapter to illustrate vascular anatomy of the intestine could be improved. The diagrams of operative procedures are drawn to a high standard, but some could be improved—for example, those on page 69. There is one obvious error in describing the course of the superior mesenteric artery which runs posterior to (not 'in front of') the neck of the pancreas, and crosses anterior to the uncinate process (not posterior to).

Mr Marston should be congratulated for producing a book which will rekindle interest in vascular disease of the intestine. This book will undoubtedly become a major and classic contribution to this most difficult subject.

R SHIELDS

Digestion and the structure and function of the gut. By D F Magee, and A F Dalley II. (Pp. 359; illustrated; £58.10.) Basel, Switzerland: Karger, 1986.

In its objectives, the book is admirable – to weld the structure and function of the alimentary system (without liver, but with biliary system) into one interpretable whole. The gallant attempt fails because the authors do not apply enough of the lessons of human physiology and pathophysiology and because they have not thought quite deeply enough (although this aspect is more satisfactory in Dr Magee's case than most other similar reviews).

Some examples may illustrate these points. The discussion starts with salivary secretion (although the last chapter, quite appropriate in a book of this sort, might better have been first – that is, the control of food and fluid intake) but the discussion of the composition of saliva does not include important components such as nitrate and growth factors, both of which are very topical in their connection with potential disease. No mention is made of the lessons (about swallowing, chewing, etc) which are derivable from the sicca syndrome; Horner's syndrome; abnormalities of salivary innervation; drugs; etc. In the motor function of the oesophagus, the factors involved in oesophagitis are not clearly discussed and their lessons for the normal