Book Reviews


This volume is the 13th in the series Major Problems in Internal Medicine edited by L.H. Smith and the first to cover a major problem in the field of gastroenterology. Malabsorption is a comprehensive monograph in which the basis of absorption, the established mechanisms of malabsorption, laboratory diagnosis and clinical features of the complex disturbances involved are presented.

The importance of the knowledge of the mechanisms for the understanding of malabsorption is stressed by the opening chapter on normal absorption, which comprises alone 50 from the 261 pages of the book. It covers the hitherto accumulated facts on electrolyte, water, vitamin, fat, carbohydrate and protein absorption and starts with a well-balanced discussion on iron and calcium uptake. The understanding of this chapter is facilitated by a number of schematic drawings. A general overview of the clinical features then follows prior to the discussion of the pathophysiology and the diagnostic procedures of malabsorption. Separate chapters are devoted to immunology and bacteriology of the gastrointestinal tract. The genetic disorders in intestinal absorption are discussed in a chapter on malabsorption syndromes in children, and this also includes hereditary pancreatic disorders. The second half of the book deals with the systematic description of the malabsorption syndrome, which is classified into seven categories: disorders due to (1) defective intraluminal hydrolysis or solubility, (2) mucosal cell abnormalities and inadequate absorptive surface, (3) lymphatic obstruction, (4) multiple defects such as partial gastrectomy and intestinal resection, (5) ‘unexplained’ causes, namely endocrine disorders and hypogammaglobulinemia, (6) infective disease and (7) drug-induced malabsorption. A list of main drugs used in the management of the malabsorption syndrome is given together with their representative dosages in the chapter ‘Diagnostic Procedures’. This, of course, would have been rather expected by the reader in the second part of the book along with the description of the clinical pictures of malabsorption.

This volume, although resembling in some passages Sleisinger and Fordtran’s excellent Gastrointestinal Disease, does not seem, however, to add any substantial information beyond this more elaborate predecessor. A great number of the figures and tables have been taken from this book and the list of references is comparably short. Thus, the question arises, whom the authors want to reach by this book. It certainly may serve those who want to inform themselves more deeply if Sleisinger and Fordtran’s book Gastrointestinal Disease is not available.

E.O. Riecken, Marburg/Lahn


Of the scientific material presented at the 10th International Congress of Gastroenterology in Budapest in July 1976, a volume of quadrennial reviews already appeared at the time of the congress. This second publication includes – in addition to a hitherto
unpublished review by Creutzfeldt on gastrointestinal hormones – outlines of eight symposia and one round table conference. The titles include: Colorectal cancer; Consequences of circulatory failure in the mesenteric region; Cell maturation and renewal in the gastrointestinal tract; Endocrine disturbances in chronic hepatic diseases; Computer science in gastroenterology; Acute and chronic pancreatitis; Current procedures for the early detection of gastric cancer; Hepatic insufficiency, and Functional disorders of the oesophagus.

The contributions are of different length and form, some as papers of full extent with documentation, some as summaries; a few are missing. But as a whole this volume provides a lively and up-to-date picture of the subjects and retains the charm of improvisation. Some - unfortunately not all - symposia are concluded with authoritative synthesis by the moderator. The most exhaustive is the report on hepatic insufficiency; the most sophisticated that on computer science; very readable is the outline of the round table conference on functional disorders of the oesophagus which is completely reproduced and carefully edited by Z. Sery, and retains all the freshness and attractability of a panel discussion. This volume will be a lasting monument of a successful meeting; it is hoped that it will be followed by the publication of the remaining congress material.

Z. Mafatka, Prague


The second edition of this popular monograph reflects the changed application of angiography since the time of the first edition in 1972. Less emphasis has been placed on its use in inflammatory bowel disease, whilst the chapter on gastrointestinal bleeding has been considerably expanded; a detailed description of superselective catheterisation techniques has been added. The chapters on tumours, on trauma and vascular diseases are excellent. Throughout the book the illustrations are of the highest quality, several of the first edition having been replaced and additional illustrations included.

The reviewer has found the chapter on portal hypertension disappointing. Although it contains interesting material and is beautifully illustrated, it does not relate the pre-shunt angiographic investigation to the information requirements of, for example, distal spleno-renal shunt surgery. Generally one misses a more positive evaluation of angiography in relation to other special diagnostic procedures, particularly in their application to individual diagnostic problem situation. However, this monograph will remain the standard book of reference in departments where angiography is practised or finds clinical application. The bibliography is very adequate and follows each chapter. Illustrations are not only of high quality but relate well to the text. The book is by no means overpriced.

H. Herlinger, Leeds


This book represents the contributions and discussions of a multidisciplinary conference held in London in November 1976 on peptide hydrolysis and transport across cell membranes in mammals, bacteria and plants. The subject is discussed on the basis of 18 papers which are devoted to small-intestinal amino acid and peptide absorption in man, monkeys and rabbits, to the mechanisms and localisation of peptide transport, to the
relationship of peptide transport and hydrolysis and to the clearance of dipeptides from plasma by the kidney. It also includes the peptide excretion in the Fanconi syndrome and a brief comment on the possible toxicity of a side-chain substituent of gluten in celiac disease. The last two papers deal with a description of newly developed methods for the study of peptide transport in bacteria on the basis of which the structural specificities of dipeptide and oligopeptide permeases in E. coli are reported and, second, with the specialized absorptive and processing tissue of barley and its possible role in amino acid and small peptide transport. To reach the most possible clarification of the subject, the book closes with a general discussion of the main topics discussed at the meeting, i.e. site of peptide hydrolysis, peptide transport through membranes, membrane digestion of peptides, epithelial transport of peptides and the question of the rate-limiting steps: hydrolysis or transport.