

There are some helpful features to the book in general: most chapters are short and broken up into sections, with a similar (though not identical) layout to most, making them easy to read. Key points at the beginning of each section are not terribly informative but do give a flavour of the section; however, summary tables throughout the text give useful "at a glance" overviews, albeit some are over-inclusive (such as lists of differential diagnoses in some of the clinical scenario sections). I liked the table in the chapter on chronic pancreatitis showing the evidence base from randomised controlled trials for surgical treatment: more chapters on common diseases (eg, irritable bowel disease) might benefit from a similar approach. For those who like algorithms, there are plenty in the "scenario" chapters, though some are unhelpfully complex. A nice touch is the inclusion of online sources of advice and information for patients given with many chapters (some of the detailed links have presumably expired as one is directed instead to the relevant "home" page) as well as short paragraphs on current controversies.

There were good chapters on irritable bowel syndrome and upper GI functional diseases by acknowledged experts, but I found the sections on motility testing and other functional tests rather cursory (eg, no mention of impedance pH/motility monitoring, high-resolution manometry or ambulatory 24-hour small bowel monitoring), in contradistinction to up-to-date sections on other diagnostic methods (eg, capsule endoscopy, positron emission scanning). When I looked up glucose hydrogen breath tests, there were three descriptions in different chapters, each with slightly differing methods and interpretation; perhaps there are other examples! As there is a section on diagnostic methods, one would hope that future editions will ensure that a single description of each method appears here, appropriately referenced from other chapters where the technique is mentioned.

Overall, I found this an engaging text, easy to dip into because the sections were in the main concise and well illustrated. The clinical scenario sections and those on diagnostic and treatment methodologies should be of particular value to those searching for clinical tips. Online or updatable e-versions may be particularly attractive, especially if illustrations/videos can be exported into PowerPoint presentations. Those looking for a pocketable handbook may be tempted by the availability of a downloadable abbreviated version for PDAs.

John de Caestecker

The clinician's guide to acid/peptic disorders and motility disorders of the gastrointestinal tract

Edited by Henry P Parkman, Robert S Fisher. New Jersey: SLACK Incorporated, 2006, £31.85 (paper book), pp 458. ISBN 1-55642-716-6

This book is authored by a group of well-known gastrointestinal (GI) experts based in North America. Each has extensive clinical experience and their collective contribution makes an excellent and thorough account of

important areas of GI practice. The book is a new addition to "The Clinicians Guide to GI Series", which has dealt with other important GI and hepatology topics. The first part of the book takes on the so-called acid/peptic disorders, which essentially encompass gastro-oesophageal reflux disease (GORD) and peptic ulcer disease, and their complications. The second section deals with motility disorders, but concentrates on selected functional disorders of the oesophagus, stomach, small bowel and colon. I found their choices very appropriate, in particular the inclusion of difficult areas such as oropharyngeal dysphagia, dumping syndrome, small bowel over-growth and faecal incontinence. These are areas that present a management challenge and the authors presented state of the art accounts on these topics. The scope of the book is very wide and the authors clearly had to restrict the choice of subjects covered in their chapters. Nevertheless, we end up with key areas relating to common upper and lower GI conditions.

When I assess any new book, I always pick two chapters representing a subject with which I am very familiar and another that I know very little about. I then ask: how well have the authors covered the former and how much have I learned for the latter? In the case of this book, I looked at the chapters on peptic disorders, a subject with which I am very familiar. I found these chapters reasonably informative and comprehensive, though the references were rather selective. There is a great deal on treatment and management, which is very appropriate for a clinical series. The average reader will learn all the basics of pathophysiology and management of GORD/peptic disorders, including brief sections on *Helicobacter pylori*. The only drawback is that treatment is presented from a North American perspective, which may limit the global usefulness of the book. Looking at the motility section, I have to admit that I have learned a great deal by reading these chapters. We all come across difficult cases of severe constipation and faecal incontinence and often wish the referrals went to other colleagues! This book covers these difficult areas admirably, and offers useful practical advice that could be followed by any GI practitioner or at least inform them as to what expertise is needed in the more complicated cases.

So, in terms of the content of this book, I found it useful and worthy. Who is it aimed at? Well, as the back cover states, it is aimed specifically at professionals who manage patients with gastrointestinal problems. It is perhaps too detailed for internists and primary care physicians. It is also too bulky for a rapid reference manual. It is best suited as a reference book for GI trainees and established GI specialists who wish to expand and update their knowledge of these areas of gastroenterology.

What about the negative aspects of this book? For a start, the title is rather clumsy. The presentation is poor, with black and white illustrations and small font throughout. The pictures, particularly the endoscopic views and histology slides, come out very poorly and contribute little to the illustrations. The tables have an archaic look about them and overall, the layout of this book reminded me of the books my father used for his medical education in the 1960s. I am sure this was not the intention of the authors, and it is a real shame

as it detracts from an otherwise very worthy clinician's guide.

Emad M El-Omar

Clinical nutrition in gastrointestinal disease

Edited by Alan L Buchman. SLACK Incorporated: New Jersey, 2006, \$134.95 (hardback), pp 674. ISBN 1-55642-697-6

The involvement of the gastrointestinal system in ensuring adequate nutrition is fundamental, yet there have been remarkably few books aimed at providing education in clinical nutrition to gastroenterologists. Dr Buchman deserves congratulation for his vision in putting together this book, which provides a thorough reference in how gastrointestinal disease affects nutritional status, how nutritional status affects disease processes, and how the most appropriate nutritional interventions can lead to improved outcomes.

There are 53 well-chosen chapters, written by contributors who are almost all North American physicians, with a number of nutritional scientists and dietitians as co-authors. Sections cover nutritional assessment, general nutrition, nutrition in gastrointestinal disease and critical care, the management of intestinal failure, nutritional support and finally, obesity. The various chapters seem to be appropriately balanced to meet the requirements of physicians who want to learn about, or update their knowledge, of nutrition. The relevance to clinical practice is clear throughout, yet there is enough basic background to serve as a resource for teaching and intellectual inquiry. Chapters on malabsorption and specific gastrointestinal diseases written from a nutritional point of view exceed what is usually found in dietetic or gastroenterology textbooks. Interesting contributions include those on prebiotics and probiotics, and surprisingly, the addition, in the one on food and water safety, of the potential for bioterrorist attack, a situation none of us hopes to encounter. This book omits broader discussion of the politics of food and malnutrition.

Intestinal failure and nutritional support are covered in detail, with good reviews of options for short-bowel syndrome and adult and paediatric enteral and parenteral feeding. In general, this book addresses well the areas of interest to gastroenterologists, but there could have been more detail on complications of percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy and other enteral tubes, and on prevention of the refeeding syndrome. Medical, legal and ethical aspects of nutritional support are discussed well.

Obesity is becoming the most important nutritional problem we face as gastroenterologists, but until the role of the gastrointestinal tract in the regulation of food intake has been clarified, much of our involvement will be interactions with patients who have had bariatric surgery. These topics are addressed at the end of this book.

The book is easy to read, with frequent use of tables and black and white figures. References are numerous but, as it inevitable with compilations such as this, they miss out on the more recent findings. This book is likely to run to further editions and it may be possible

to achieve a faster time to publication. It is, however, an important new resource for all gastroenterologists in training and in practice. It should find a place in the offices of all involved in luminal gastroenterology, and enable the understanding and the advancement of clinical nutrition, with benefits to our patients.

Julian R F Walters

Immunology and diseases of the gut

Edited by T T MacDonald, A C Bateman. London: Remedica, 2006, £20.00 (softcover), pp 179. ISBN 1-901346-56-0.

Gastroenterologists (and other clinical specialists) complain that immunology is conceptually opaque, overcomplicated and obsessed with acronyms and unnecessary jargon. As a result, any message it may have for understanding disease is hidden and/or ignored. Immunologists on the other hand, are frustrated by what they see as lazy and superficial attempts to try to understand a topic they find to be unimaginably clear and relevant. Often, there is little or no significant communication between the disciplines, meaning that important opportunities for improving diagnosis and treatment are lost. This is a major loss to 21st-century medicine and to gastroenterology in particular, in which, as the authors of this book point out, many of the most important conditions have an immunological basis. Unfortunately, this issue is not likely to improve in the foreseeable future. Academic gastroenterologists are increasingly a threatened species in many countries, not least in the UK, and most medical schools no longer devote significant time to basic subjects such as immunology. Thus junior clinicians do not have the building blocks to pick up a new area easily if the opportunity does arise for research.

Aimed principally at practising clinicians and pathologists, this book attempts to address at least the result of some of these problems, by providing basic information on the workings of the immune system and relating this to intestinal disease. It is designed to be read from a background of little or no previous knowledge, and the authors are an excellent mix to perform the task. Tom MacDonald is an eminent mucosal immunologist and has published extensively on several of the diseases discussed in the book. Adrian Bateman is an experienced histopathologist with a special interest in gastrointestinal (GI) disease, and adds a solid grounding in the systematic assessment of immunopathology and in basic mechanisms of pathogenesis, again topics to which current medical school curricula now pay little heed.

The volume itself is relatively short (<200 pages) and can be read as one entity or in parts. The "meat" of the book is a list of individual GI diseases in alphabetical order and covering everything from infectious disease to immunodeficiency and cancer. Each of these comprises short sections addressing topics such as genetic basis, diagnosis, treatment and other issues of direct clinical relevance, as well as a brief overview of the immunopathology. These are generally excellent, although in places, they do seem to assume a reasonable knowledge of systematic pathology. They could also have discussed the immunological aspects rather more directly related to the earlier sections on the immune system, rather than from the pathologist's viewpoint. A brief glossary of terms at the end of the book provides cross-referenced definitions of most of the important immunological terms and some clinical ones. These are essential components of books of this kind and here have been carefully chosen, allowing even the first-time reader to find a path quickly round the inevitable abbreviations and specialist terms.

The first parts of the book give an introduction to basic immunology, followed by a more in-depth discussion of the special features of the intestinal immune system. These sections take the reader from fundamental concepts, through the mechanisms of immune function in a concise and always readable manner. They should be readily accessible to the target audience and will also be useful for medical students, or anyone else looking for a quick revision of the most important issues.

Inevitably with such an approach, there are omissions and some oversimplifications, although these are mostly minor. Some of these include the definition of an antigen and the differences between adaptive and innate immunity, topics that are great sources of confusion to the novice and are important when considering the causes and treatment of inflammation. In this respect, it is also surprising that the new ideas on the role of the innate immune response in coeliac disease are not mentioned. Another topic that warranted more attention is the role of major histocompatibility complex genes as disease markers, given the strong association between several of the GI diseases discussed and individual human leucocyte antigen haplotypes. These are described in the sections on disease, but not explained fully. There is also no direct discussion of dendritic cells as the crucial antigen presenting cells. Finally, it is probably unlikely that the readers of this book will appreciate fully the discussion on whether humans are immunologically tolerant to food proteins and commensal bacteria. This is a controversial topic, and not all mucosal immunologists would agree with the authors' conclusions here.

In summary, this excellent newcomer fills an important gap in the market and will be of use to a wide variety of readers.

Allan M Mowat