

documents. He succeeded and even seven years after his death virtually all that he wrote still applies.

Many general practitioners now spend hours reading official documents and those who are active in the medical organisations may have to write papers themselves. They will find in this book an outspoken criticism of many mistakes in official publications and a clear guide to good style.

It is the best book of its kind that I know and the style of the *Journal of the Royal College of General Practitioners* is now based on it.

D. J. PEREIRA GRAY

Gastroenterology (1973). I. A. D. BOUCHIER. Pp. 292+X. London: Baillière Tindall. Price: £2.00.

Gastroenterological problems are frequently encountered in general practice, particularly syndromes that are characterised by abdominal pain, diarrhoea or vomiting, either singly or in combination. While many such syndromes are mild in severity and self-limiting in duration, the fact that they may be the herald of serious underlying pathology must always be in the forefront of a general practitioner's mind. A wise general practitioner will refresh his memory periodically and will seek to learn the new concepts in the aetiology, pathology, presentation, investigation and treatment of disease. Such refreshment may be obtained from attendance at continuing education courses or by reading well-written and well-presented texts. Dr Bouchier has written such a text and there will be few general practitioners who will not benefit from reading his book.

Gastroenterology is the latest in the series of *Concise Medical Textbooks* and is extremely good value. The author states in his preface that it is his hope that the book is both balanced and coherent. It is both. It covers the common and the uncommon conditions in an easily readable and, generally, easily understandable form. The sections on physiological function are so condensed that they require careful reading if they are to be understood. Undoubtedly the book will appeal to the generalist more than to the specialist and will be appreciated most by those who are already acquainted with the subject. A copy should be on every general practitioner's bookshelf.

The author emphasises that the presentation that he has adopted is essentially personal, but few would take exception to his views and the order of the list of contents demonstrates his logical approach to the subject.

I found only one small typographical error, on page 171, where the word lipoproteins is repeated unnecessarily.

H. W. K. ACHESON

A concise textbook of gastroenterology (1973). LANGMAN, M. J. S. Pp. 192. Edinburgh and London: Churchill Livingstone. Price: £1.25. The author has attempted the formidable task of combining three major areas of clinical practice;

medicine, surgery, and general practice, and produced a small, comprehensive, up-to-date and readable text. The concise nature of the book has inevitably led to brevity (192 pages, 21 chapters) but this in a sense is its virtue; it allows a rapid appreciation of a disease or situation, or area of disease. Further information is available via the reference section.

Separate chapters are devoted to oesophageal disorders, peptic ulcer, haematemesis and melaena, pernicious anaemia and the stomach, gastro-intestinal cancer and polyposis, biliary tract, and pancreatic disease. The commoner disorders are dealt with in useful detail and it is illuminating to find medical and surgical disciplines united under a common patho-physiological basis. In the field of peptic ulcer and gall bladder disease, however, the impact of Childs' work (1972) has yet to be felt, providing as it does, a new concept in aetiology and management.

In the five chapters concerned with the liver, the author has managed to convey precisely and in some detail what the reader wants to know. This section encompasses jaundice, hepatic function, hepatomegaly, hepatitis, cirrhosis and other liver disease, ascites, liver failure, and a useful chapter on portal hypertension. It is perhaps a pity, in a work of this calibre, that no reference is made to the value of mannitol in preventing renal failure in patients undergoing operation for obstructive jaundice (Dawson; 1965, 1968).

The remaining chapters are primarily concerned with intestinal disorders. Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis are outlined well, with useful information on treatment. The malabsorption syndromes, always difficult to comprehend, are elucidated clearly. The management of fluid and electrolyte balance in intestinal obstruction is clearly defined, though few would agree that early small bowel obstruction is relatively painless. The resumé of appendicitis is disappointing in that the appendix mass as an entity is not adequately clarified. Also, in stating that acute intestinal ischaemia presents as an acute abdominal emergency, the author overlooks the earlier clinical picture of intestinal colic alone; the stage at which surgical treatment is more likely to be feasible. Two further chapters cover intestinal parasites and infective diarrhoea; written well with up-to-date advice on management. Sadly, "summer" diarrhoea appears in yet another text; non-specific and probably viral in origin, this is far and away the most commonly occurring diarrhoea, now recognised all the year round.

The final chapter is most valuable. Indications for, and how to perform common tests of gastro-intestinal function are coupled with the results and their interpretation.

Despite the few criticisms, this book is worth buying. It can be carried in the pocket, and gives more down-to-earth advice on how to treat a patient than many texts. It will be found useful by both undergraduate and postgraduate alike, as

an immediate comprehensive reference, or as an avenue to further reading.

REFERENCES

- Childs, P. (1972). *British Journal of Surgery*, **59**, 669.
 Dawson, J. L. (1965). *British Medical Journal*, **1**, 82.
 Dawson, J. L. (1968). *Annals of Royal College of Surgeons of England*, **42**, 163.

M. T. EVERETT

Birth Control in America. The Career of Margaret Sanger. KENNEDY, D. M. New Haven and London: Yale University Press. Price: \$2.95. This book provides a remarkable insight into the way a democratic society changes its mind. It is by no means a biography of Margaret Sanger.

Rather it is a complex social history in which Mrs Sanger played a leading role. Mr Kennedy is fully prepared to criticise his heroine, and there are times when the reader wonders whether contraception became accepted in America in spite of Margaret Sanger, rather than as a result of her efforts. This view is particularly apparent in her relationship with the medical profession. Rather than relinquish any of her control of her own clinic, she steadfastly refused the collaboration of Robert Latou Dickinson who, as president of the American Gynaecological Society, would have ensured the backing of an influential section of the medical profession for the birth control movement.

This book is a well-written account of an important piece of recent medical history.

CLIFFORD R. KAY

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