

# BOOK REVIEWS

## *Advances in Gastroenterology*

**Progress Reports from Gut, Series 2.** Ed. Sheila Sherlock. (Pp. 231; £2.25.) *Gut*, B.M.A. House, London, 1974.

"Alimentary diseases are common yet often their aetiology is unknown. This ignorance reflects a basic lack of understanding of normal gut function." This statement begins one of the chapters and epitomizes a feeling which pervades this volume, that advances can result only from a symbiosis between basic science and clinical observation.

Some of the progress reports selected for inclusion in this volume describe techniques such as colonoscopy and the Lundh test.

Other reports describe areas of knowledge that at present are almost entirely pure research—for example, prostaglandins and the gastrointestinal tract. Yet other chapters are concerned with current therapeutics, as exemplified by carbenoxolone, intestinal parasites, and dietary fibre. In general the progress reports achieve their objective, namely, to indicate the "state of the art" when written. Some go further and by critically evaluating the evidence may stimulate fresh inquiry; many provide references which could provide the necessary background.

This collection has been made from a specialist journal. The topics which have

been selected crop up frequently, however, in general medicine and consequently the volume should have considerable appeal to general physicians. The volume does not invite much adverse criticism. Non-uniformity of style between contributions is hardly avoidable and the variety is indeed rather refreshing. To have had the original reference for each of the progress reports given in full (either in the table of contents or on each report) would have been desirable. An index would have been an extra chore in production but would have made the volume more useful.

D. A. PRICE EVANS

## *Some Clinical Medicine*

**Common Symptoms of Disease in Adults.** P. B. S. Fowler, F.R.C.P. (Pp. 314; £4.) Blackwell, 1974.

Dedicated to the old Charing Cross Hospital this excellent book is based on lectures given there, and its simple and didactic style will ensure compulsive perusal. Full lists of causes of the symptoms mentioned could be provided by any Membership candidate, but they would lack the clinical wisdom apparent throughout this book. It is therefore the reader of some experience who will most appreciate it. The arrangement is alphabetical; symptoms of children's diseases are omitted; and the text is not burdened by references. A sprinkling of anecdotes whets the appetite and makes it a chatty book hard to put down.

While the sound of hooves should not make a doctor think first of zebras he is not denied here the intellectual satisfaction of rare maladies. Most clinicians will find sentences which recall personal diagnostic blunders, such as "the onset of infective orchitis is never sudden." There is much here to enhance our appreciation of the pathological museum of the Underground and the High Street. Very good sections are those on sore throat and depression, and the reference to "non-disease" (the doctor's wife's pseudo-myxoedema) is apt. More than 20 pages are taken up by symptoms attributable to drugs—a good indication of the book's up-to-date approach.

The index is full, but does not include all the clinical gems, some of which were

hard to find again. The discussion on cramp did not seem to include the common variety, which afflicts elderly but otherwise symptomless physicians. Other omitted items were heart burn and water brash, and the steal and entrapment syndromes. The next edition, which will soon be needed, might use more heavy type in the text. Some of the eponyms need attention, and perhaps some brief biographical notes would add to the historical orientation apparent in the account of urethral discharge.

This book is highly recommended to all in the medical, nursing, and ancillary professions who cannot fail to enjoy and benefit from it. By present standards it is not expensive.

C. ALLAN BIRCH

## *Some Cardiovascular History*

**Microcirculation. Benchmark Papers in Human Physiology.** Ed. Mary P. Wiedeman, Ph.D. (Pp. 429; £11.65.) John Wiley, 1974.

This is one of a series of books about human physiology in which are collected reproductions of original articles that the editor considers to be of vital importance in the development of a particular field of knowledge. In this book the subject is the "microcirculation." The editor, Dr. Mary P. Wiedeman of Temple University Medical School, Philadelphia, defines the microcirculation as "that portion of the cardiovascular system involved in the transfer of nutrients and the removal of metabolic waste products." It comprises the capillary vessels together with the pre-capillary arterioles and the post-capillary venules.

Five periods in the development of our knowledge are distinguished: I, early investigators beginning with William Harvey; II, from van Leeuwenhoek to Krogh;

III, the era of Krogh; IV, the renaissance after Krogh; and V, in the last decade. Representative publications with their illustrations from each period are presented, including chapters from books as well as papers from journals. At the beginning of each section the editor provides a valuable commentary in which she tells us why these particular publications were selected and what their influence was.

This book gives a proper historical perspective to our views on the structure and function of the microcirculation, and reminds us how relatively recently effective information has been gained. Dr. Wiedeman rightly dates the beginning of this period to the publication of the lectures of August Krogh in 1922, and she points out that the first efficient technique for examining directly the microcirculation in man was published by the Swedish investigator P.-I. Broneman as late as 1968. This volume certainly ought to be added to the library

of departments of physiology and medicine and will save those interested in the historical background of their subject much dusty work in the library.

M. C. G. ISRAËLS

Though many doctors have attained distinction as writers few indeed have done so as poets. A remarkable exception is Dr. Edward Lowbury, who manages to combine the busy professional life of a bacteriologist with the writing of poetry that is at once lucid, haunting, and memorable. His imagination responds with special acuity to something of deep concern to most of us—the contrast between transience and permanence in man's life. People who say that modern poetry is obscure or trivial will receive both refutation and enjoyment from Dr. Lowbury's latest collection in *The Night Watchman* (Chatto & Windus and Hogarth Press, 1974, £1.50 net).