Book reviews

Textbook of Cystic Fibrosis. By J D Lloyd-Still. Pp 498: £49.50 hardback. Boston, Bristol, London: Wright PSG, 1983.

The prognosis for the cystic fibrosis (CF) patient has improved in recent years. Unfortunately, as with many relatively uncommon chronic complex diseases there may be problems in introducing recent advances into the treatment of every patient. This excellent textbook will help in overcoming this undesirable state of affairs. Dr Lloyd-Still has certainly succeeded in his declared intention of assembling the mass of available data relating to CF into a comprehensive reference source for a wide variety of practising physicians, research workers, health personnel, and others.

Every aspect of CF is covered from the basic defect to the organisation of the clinic. Many chapters contain a considerable amount of basic information as background before discussing the situation that exists in the CF patient—for example the historical and physiological aspects of the vitamins, normal digestion, and respiratory physiology. This information, although adding length to the book, is really quite valuable for the practising physician. The references are numerous but relevant. It is almost unavoidable that in a volume with many contributors there is some repetition. References to other chapters are, however, well placed and helpful.

Many of the details of CF management are based on conviction and opinion rather than established facts. Nevertheless there are some specific points that deserve comment. The reliability of immunoreactive trypsin neonatal screening is perhaps underestimated and the references quoted hardly representative of most authors' experience. The value of salt retaining steroids in the evaluation of marginal sweat test in adults as described by Dr Hodson is not mentioned, although in children their use is not recommended. Most paediatric gastroenterologists would not automatically rule out other causes of malabsorption because the sweat test was positive. Certainly they would not regard the pancreozymin-secretin test as 'essential in order to establish the degree of pancreatic dysfunction . . . to assess ongoing changes'. The advice to give the pancreatic

replacement treatment as one dose after the meal would not receive general support. In both chapters where portal hypertension is discussed in detail, sclerotherapy for treatment of oesophageal varices is not mentioned.

The author and his colleagues (many of whose names are identified with important landmarks of the disease) are to be congratulated on filling the need for a comprehensive and authoritative reference volume on cystic fibrosis. It is essential reading for paediatricians, both chest and general physicians, who undertake the care of CF patients, and can be recommended to anyone involved with the management of this difficult disease.

J M LITTLEWOOD

Placental Physiology. Structure and Function of Feto-maternal Exchange. By J J Faber and K L Thornburg. Pp 208: \$41.00 hardback. New York: Raven Press, 1983.

Most child mortality today and much morbidity may be ascribed to preterm birth, to malformation, or to poor growth in utero, together with the social difficulties that spring from these fetal handicaps. Placental disorder is likely to play a part in the development of these problems and we therefore need to have a clearer understanding of placental function.

Placental Physiology is a major contribution to this process, but an incomplete one for endocrinology is completely omitted as are the relation of physiology to metabolism, to immunology, or to placental invasiveness, and any coupling of intracellular events to placental transport. The authors, who have themselves made numerous important contributions to the study of 'feto-maternal exchange', might have done better to have used their subtitle on its own.

The work has 14 chapters and a good bibliography. The opening chapter on placental structure is the best short review of the topic. The book ends with excellent discussions on the transfer of nutrients and of foreign materials; essential reading for anyone interested in the interpretation of cord blood or scalp blood concentrations of drugs or metabolites. In between are

mathematically rigorous but comprehensible sections on blood flow, on porosity, on gas diffusion, and on protein transfer. Each is beautifully laid out and tightly argued. Occasionally the authors can be accused of presenting a pet theory as closer to an established fact than it deserves, or of selective or even, on one or two occasions, inaccurate quotation. Nevertheless this is by far and away the best monograph on epithelial aspects of placental function. It is furthermore a delightful and mind expanding weekend read.

R D H BOYD

Practical Paediatric Gastroenterology. By J A Walker-Smith, J R Hamilton, W A Walker. Pp 400: £27.00 hardback. London: Butterworths, 1983.

This is a further text in the outstanding series 'Postgraduate Paediatrics' edited by the late John Apley. The three authors are all internationally acknowledged experts within paediatric gastroenterology and bring with them a depth and range of knowledge it would be hard to match.

The book itself is divided into two parts of approximately equal length. The first half includes symptoms and signs, with chapters on such topics as chronic diarrhoea, constipation, and liver failure. This problem orientated section of the book is likely to give it appreciably more direct relevance at the bedside than most of the conventional speciality texts which concentrate on disease entities alone. The second half of the book discusses specific disease states, divided into chapters according to the organ or system affected. Each chapter, in both sections of the book, is accompanied by a short bibliography concentrating on recent and relevant articles, including many dated 1982 and at least one from 1983.

In general the book is well written, although it suffers in places from a plethora of Latin and Greek rather than Anglo-Saxon and some of the chapters would be easier to read if the sentences were shortened. There are scattered diagrams and tables and occasional flow charts. These are very helpful and more would be welcomed.