GASTROENTEROLOGY—Volume II, Second Edition—

Herbert L. Bockus, M.D., Emeritus Professor of Medicine, University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Medicine; and Present and Former Colleagues at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Medicine and School of Medicine, W. B. Saunders Company, Philadelphia and London, 1964. 1,241 pages, $28.00.

Volume II of the second edition of Bockus' "Gastroenterology" covers the small intestine, disorders of absorption and nutrition and anemia of gastrointestinal disorders, the colon and diseases of the peritoneum, mesentery, and omentum. Composed largely by pupils of Bockus the volume brings up to date the clinical discussion of diseases and disorders of these sections of the gastrointestinal tract. Of particular interest are the considerations of some of the modern techniques of investigating diseases of the small bowel such as biopsy, intubation, tests of absorption and malabsorption and lymphangiography. There are extensive and excellent discussions of the clinical phases of such commonly recognized entities as regional enteritis, intestinal obstruction (as viewed by the internist), chronic ulcerative colitis and benign and malignant tumors of the small and large intestine. Along with these are excellent chapters on "Functional Disorders of the Colon" including the diagnosis and management of constipation and on "The Malabsorptive Syndromes of Protein Losing" and the discussion of protein losing enteropathies, Zollinger-Ellison syndrome and familial recurring polyserositis will bring the reader up to date on these recently recognized syndromes.

As in the case of Volume I the text has been prepared primarily for practicing physicians but surgeons, radiologists and even those primarily interested in the laboratory will find much of interest and value in the discussions as presented. The references are excellent and will enable the reader to know where to expand and get further detailed information.

The stature of Bockus' textbook on gastroenterology is enhanced by the appearance of Volume II and practicing physicians and medical students will long look to it as a standard reference work on the subject.

DWIGHT L. WILBUR, M.D.

THE COMPLICATIONS OF MODERN MEDICAL PRACTICES—A Treatise on iatrogenic Diseases—David M. Spain, M.D., Clinical Professor of Pathology, State University of New York, Downstate Medical Center; Pathologist, Brooklyn Methodist Hospital, Brooklyn, New York; formerly, Director of Department of Laboratories and Research and Medical Examiner of Westchester County, New York; Formerly Associate Professor of Pathology, College of Physicians and Surgeons, Columbia University, New York, Grune & Stratton, Inc., 381 Park Avenue South, New York 16, N.Y., 1963. 342 pages, $12.75.

The magnitude of the field of iatrogenic disease is illustrated by the fact that the number of articles on the subject has doubled during the past ten years. With the exception of surgical excision, almost all types of specific treatment of cancer are also capable of inducing cancer under appropriate conditions. The antimicrobial agents can even, while curing infection, provide the opportunity for new infections to develop. Corticosteroids may precipitate new manifestations of the various diseases that are used to alleviate.

The hazards of practicing medicine in the present day are such that the contents of The Complications of Modern Medical Practices must be in our awareness constantly. Dr. Spain has done a great service to doctors by encompassing as much as he has between the covers of a single book. At the same time he confronts us with a choice akin to that of Hamlet: "To treat or not to treat: that is the question."

Another paraphrase from Hamlet seems appropriate as the author himself discusses this book. He states that "it is not intended to support or encourage any concept of therapeutic nihilism. It is also not intended as an encyclopedia of drug reactions. It is certainly not intended as a compilation of mistakes, accidents or errors in judgment. Finally, it is not concerned with the abuses of self-medications."

This reviewer thinks the author doth protest too much. What is it about? "One of the purposes is to present a conceptual view of the broad spectrum of complications that result from the use of acceptable diagnostic and therapeutic procedures. In this sense, it is hoped that the actual and potential good of these powerful modern medical weapons currently available will be enhanced by increasing the physician's awareness of the many dangers, pitfalls and complications inherent in this arsenal."

Allowing for the differences in the critique of a pathologist versus that of a biologist, one may compare Dr. Spain's book with Rachel Carson's Silent Spring. They both tell of the dangers created by the use of man-made cures—in the one case dealing with the tremendous harmful potential of agricultural chemicals, in the other with the myriad large and small complications which the therapist himself may produce. No matter how promising or how carefully conceived, the chance of a reaction is always present.

While giving this book general praise, the reviewer notes that proofreading errors are fairly numerous and that some subjects are skipped over lightly. For example, the only reference to atabrine is the renal tubular damage which it may cause, similar to mercury toxicity.

Dr. Spain poses one moral beyond the obvious ones, which all of us would do well to observe: Whenever possible the diagnosis should be made first; only then, and after the natural history of the disease condition is considered in all its possible aspects, are the more powerful agents of treatment justified.

EDGAR WAYBURN, M.D.


This volume, one of three covering the latest International Congress of Genetics, contains the abstracts of contributed papers, demonstrations and films presented at the conference. The usefulness of the book for the average American reader has been increased by using English throughout. A wide range of topics concerned with different organisms is covered in the abstracts which have been assembled into 18 sections. This breakdown into areas of special interest is most helpful because a subject index is not included, although an author index is presented at the end of the book. Out of a total of 885 abstracts only 147 are concerned with man. However, these have been made more readily available by collecting them into three sections entitled: Human Genetics (84); Human Cytogenetics (47); and Dermatoglyphics (36). Although only a small section is directly concerned with clinical medicine, the reader with an interest in human genetics is presented with a brief summary of worldwide activity in the rapidly expanding areas of genetical research in man. There is considerable variation in the information content of the abstracts and only a few give pertinent references. However, many of these abstracts have already been expanded into full length papers and published in various appropriate journals. The great diversity of subjects in the Human Genetics section is