the contents, there is no preface to this book. Therefore, the reader can only guess at its purpose before turning to the text itself. It is immediately clear that this is not a review of gastrointestinal pathology but, rather, a catholic collection of what seem to be randomly selected topics, not all of which are necessarily representative of the 'advancing edge' of gastroenterology. Nor is the book an up to date source of information on those topics which it does cover. There are only one or two references later than 1985 and, if the chapters on gastrointestinal lymphoma and mucosal immunity are representative, then the book is very dated indeed. The first chapter, which is a somewhat turgid account of differentiation in gastric cancer, accounts for slightly less than a quarter of the entire book; it is written in the style of a scientific paper as is the second on the prognosis of this disease. The style changes to that of a book rather than a journal as chapters follow on a subtype of gastritis, autonomic nerves, lymphoma, neuroendocrine tumours and their cells, protein-losing enteropathy and mucosal immunity. The final chapter on Japanese Crohn's disease is once more presented as a formal scientific paper. I have no doubt that the authors have given their best but the editors have not. They appear to have given little guidance to the authors and to have been in no hurry to get the book into press. Perhaps the missing preface is no idle omission; like this reviewer the editors seem to have been unable to summarize the reasons for producing this volume.

Professor P.G. Isaacson
Department of Morbid Anatomy
University College Hospital
London WC1E 6JJ

Family Problems, Peter R. Williams. Pp viii + 108, illustrated. Oxford University Press, London, New York, Tokyo, 1989. £12.50 softback.

Many general practitioners are 'family doctors' only in name. They more usually act as personal physicians to many individuals, albeit often caring for several branches of the same family. All families experience problems together and sometimes the stresses, say of divorce or bereavement, can cause one member to feel ill and go, or be taken, to the doctor. At times it helps to take a broad view of the whole family when trying to remedy such a situation. Every family possesses its own dynamic and quite small adjustments can produce a valuable reduction of anxiety and an increase in mutual tolerance. Peter Williams' book is about how ordinary doctors can develop their skills in seeing and understanding normal families who have problems. He suggests simple techniques, adapted from systemic family therapy and from marital therapy, that can be used within the setting of general practice. He also discusses the problem of working with other professionals and of sharing and referring cases.

The purpose of the book is to sensitize readers to think in a family context when a patient comes with symptoms that may have started at a time of domestic crisis. It is to encourage doctors to reflect beyond the limits of the consulting room and to try working with couples or whole families when their problems might be appropriately understood that way.

It is a short book, clearly written and presented with some helpful diagrams, tables and illustrations of family trees. It is no handbook to therapy, there are several such works suggested at the end of the text. Rather it is an invitation to doctors to adopt a family-based viewpoint, with some simple and practical suggestions how to go about it. As such, any enthusiastic general practitioner will find it worth perusing, to consider whether to risk developing a worthwhile extension to the more conventional if limited techniques of one-to-one doctoring.

Oliver Samuel
The Pinn Medical Centre
Pinner
Middlesex HA5 1HF

Patient Care in Community Practice. A handbook of non-medical health-care, Robin J. Harman. Pp xvi + 239, illustrated. The Pharmaceutical Press, London, 1989. £10.00.

The author of the book has identified a number of conditions met with in the community and has produced a reference book on the management of these conditions and a guide to the products used in their management. He has drawn from available information and presented it in a very well laid out, easy-to-read, publication. As a pharmacist, he was always being asked his advice by the general public, an experience common to other health professionals working in the community. It is impossible to be an expert in all conditions one meets with, but this book contains a lot of information to assist in providing support for these patients, aimed particularly at doctors, nurses and pharmacists.

A chapter is given to each condition ranging from stomatherapy, incontinence, abdominal hernias, use of compression hosiery, wound management, dietary products, oxygen and inhalation therapy, to the more specialist treatments with parenteral nutrition and home dialyses. At the beginning of each chapter is a clear summary followed by a brief introduction to the condition. Each contains clear and helpful diagrams and some pictures illustrating the text and, particularly, the products discussed.

With the exception of dietary products all the other products described demand practical expertise as well as the background theory, so this book cannot replace the practical instruction by experts in their use. However, as a reference book I think this book has achieved what it set out to do: namely, provide well laid out information to form a basis for patient care, and a comprehensive directory of manufacturers and organisations for further advice and information.

Hazel Moore,
District Nursing Officer
East Oxford Health Centre
Oxford OX4 1XD