Gastrointestinal Tract Cancer. Eds. M.
Lipkin and R. A. Good (1978). Sloan
Kettering Institute Cancer Series. New
York: Plenum Medical Book Co. 763 pp.
£28.35.

This is a splendid book. It provides an
excellent collection of articles on a number of
carefully selected topics on gastrointestinal
cancer. Most contributors are members of
staff of the Sloan Kettering Institute, New
York, but well known authorities from Europe
and the Far East are represented. The editors
are to be congratulated, not only on their
choice of expert contributors and their sub-
jects, but on producing a volume with a
remarkably uniform literary style. As a
result, it provides both profitable and en-
joyable reading.

There are substantial articles on the rela-
tionship of the immune system to gastro-
intestinal cancer, and an authoritative review
of α chain disease as it affects the gut. The
absence of consideration of lymphomas of the
gastrointestinal tract is a surprising and
perhaps unfortunate omission. The epi-
demiology of these diseases is described in an
exemplary manner, at any rate for the under-
standing and interest of the clinician. The
importance of hereditary factors is well
defined, including an authoritative review of
familial polyposis coli.

There is also a most useful section on exper-
imental carcinogenesis, animal systems and
models, which will be of interest to clinicians,
pathologists and others, as well as to research
workers. The use of carcino-embryonic anti-
gen is discussed in a detailed and critical man-
ner, indicating how it may be sensibly used to
monitor the progress of patients with gastro-
intestinal cancer. There is a most exhaustive
review of skin markers of malignant disease,
which will be of great value to all oncologists
and dermatologists, as well as to gastro-
enterologists.

The weakest section of this book concerns
management of these diseases, and perhaps
this is a fair indication of our lack of progress
in this field. Advances elsewhere in our under-
standing of gastrointestinal cancer have been
much more impressive. The discussion of
surgery, chemotherapy and immunotherapy
is much less perceptive than other contribu-
tions, but this does not detract from the
overall high standing of this book. It is to be
recommended to all oncologists, as well as to
physicians and surgeons interested in gastro-
enterology. It will be found to be a most
readable text, but it will also be a valuable
and stimulating source of reference to our
current understanding of origin, natural
history and management of gastrointestinal
cancer. It is a considerable contribution to the
literature on the subject.

W. Duncan

The Story of Cancer. A. C. Braun (1979).
London: Addison-Wesley. pp. 308. £12.35
(HB). £6.05 (PB).

Before anyone has the temerity to write
or publish a book with such a bold title as
“The Story of Cancer”, he should weigh the
prospect of the acclamation he might receive
from non-specialists against the likelihood of
his earning scathing comments from specialists and ultra specialists. Let me say at the
outset, therefore, that in my opinion the
decision to produce this book was right. It is
based on 4 lectures presented in 1977 at The
Rockefeller University in New York to a
select group of gifted high-school students,
and is intended to provide an overview of the
nature of cancer, its causes, treatments and
cures. Several other books which have
attempted to cover the same broad field have
suffered the disadvantage of multi-author-
ship. By contrast the present book, with its
continuity and freedom from overlap, is
refreshing to read. But perhaps its greatest
virtue is its clarity. The English style is
remarkably simple in view of the complexities
of the topics which are discussed. Moreover,
although reference is made to nearly 300
original papers, the text is not overburdened
in consequence.

Much of Braun’s own research has concerned
plant tumours, particularly crown-gall disease.
Not surprisingly, therefore, many parts of the
text and most of the illustrations are devoted
to these subjects, and these highly specialized
parts of the cancer story are well-indexed. By
contrast, I looked in vain in the index for any
mention of Sir MacFarlane Burnet, immuno-
surveillance, or immuno-therapy, even though
9 pages of the text are devoted to a clear and
useful discussion of “Immunological Ap-
proaches to Control”. This illustrates the fact
that the book is much more vulnerable to
criticism in relation to what it does not con-
tain, than in relation to its contents. For those
of us who are sick to death of (for the most part) exaggerated and alarmist reports of hazard from environmental carcinogens, it is something of a relief to see that only 15 pages of the book are devoted to this topic. However, although what is said is interesting, it fails to provide a comprehensive overview of the subject. Likewise the sections on cancer detection and treatment are generally thin.

In summary, this easy-to-read book will interest and be of real value to those embarking on biomedical research careers. What it lacks in coverage, it makes up for in clarity and wisdom of approach.

F. J. C. Roe

Bone Tumours. Diagnosis, Treatment and Prognosis. A. G. HUVOS (1979). Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders. 478 pp. £23.50.

Bone tumours are rare, but come in a bewildering variety, and almost every patient with a bone tumour causes difficulty, even anguish, to the pathologists, radiologists, surgeons and (now) oncologists who have to make the diagnostic and therapeutic decisions. Advances in our understanding of bone tumours have mostly come from referral centres, where accumulated experience and close co-operation between the specialties concerned have delineated new tumour entities and clarified our knowledge of the better-known types. We have been well served, over the last 20 years, by the volumes on bone tumours by Dahlin, Jaffe and Lichtenstein, all drawing on their great experience; we now have this new book from the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York. It can be said at once that it is worthy of a place with these classics. Dr Huvos has arranged his book on traditional lines, and for each tumour type describes the clinical features, radiographic and pathological features, and treatment. The radiographs, and microphotographs are well chosen and of uniformly excellent quality. Very full chapter bibliographies extend up to 1977.

There are one or two personal idiosyncrasies. Aneurysmal bone cyst is nowhere described as an entity; reticulum-cell sarcoma of bone appears as “primary non-Hodgkin lymphoma”, and the mysterious “adamantinoma” of long bones as “malignant angioblastoma”. A chapter on conditions simulating bone tumours might have been useful. But these are small points. This book can be confidently recommended to departments of radiology, radiotherapy, pathology, orthopaedic surgery and oncology. By present-day standards the price is reasonable for a very fully illustrated and well produced book. (Perhaps in a second edition the publishers will change the unsightly and space-wasting chapter headings.)

O. G. DODGE