

Book reviews

Glaukom, Ein Handbuch. By W. LEYDHECKER, 1974. Pp. 868, 36 figs, 77 tables, bibl. Springer, Berlin (\$114)

The problem of keeping up to date with the continuously expanding literature on glaucoma is not a new one, but fortunately since the beginning of the century there has been a series of dedicated senior students of the subject who have provided us at suitable intervals of time with valuable critical reviews. Professor Leydhecker produced such a work in 1960 and his present book extends the review, covering completely the literature from 1930-1970, and including as much as possible up to 1972. In this second book, the text has been rewritten and the material rearranged, and the magnitude of this task may be judged from the fact that the writings of a further 12 years have necessitated an increase in the number of pages from 666 to 868. It is somewhat depressing to discover that this increase of about one-third in the size of the book has been accompanied by an approximately three-fold increase in its cost (in German currency).

An essential process in producing this sort of book is a reduction in volume but this should not be achieved by evaporation to dryness. The author of this book has been rightly concerned therefore with producing not just a catalogue of all that has been written but an interesting commentary as well. This is a difficult matter, but the aim has been achieved without losing the possibility of identifying the original publication upon which each statement is based, and without making the text unreadable by the frequent parenthetic naming of authors. It does mean that to find a reference it is often necessary to go from the numerical superscript in the text to a footnote and thence to a sectional list of references, but this is not too arduous, because of the way in which the book has been organized. Each chapter deals with a particular major aspect of glaucoma, as, for example, secondary glaucoma, or the incidence of glaucoma, or gonioscopy, or medical treatment, and so on. Within each chapter there is a further breakdown into numbered sections and sub-sections and into even smaller parts, the point being that there are seldom more than a few pages of text before one comes to the sectional list of references. This means that many references have had to be listed several times, and this must have entailed a vast amount of work, but it has been fully justified in the resulting benefit to the reader. At the end of the book there is an author index and a subject index, the former occupying no less than 108 pages, while the latter takes up a mere twenty pages. One could argue that there is a lack of balance here, but perhaps it worked out this way inevitably, the published papers being the origin of the whole work. Also, one has to state that the subject index stood up well to a trial of its efficiency by the reviewer, although there does seem to be an unfortunate loss of arrangement under the letter S.

Apart from a few gonioscopic views of angles, some drawings of surgical procedures, and one or two pictures of

tonometers, there are hardly any illustrations; the author says that this was done to keep the price down but this is one area in which economy may have been too drastic, and there would have been appreciable benefit from the inclusion of a few examples of electron microscopy of the outflow pathways or of charts of field defects or of a histogram showing the distribution of normal intraocular pressure or a fluorescein angiogram of the glaucomatous disc, and so on. By contrast with this lack of pictures there are many tables, the majority of which are extremely useful, summarizing well such diverse matters as the incidence of glaucoma, the responses to be regarded as pathological in the provocative tests, or the results of surgical procedures. A few tables are of questionable value, such as those which occupy three pages giving the values of outflow facility in tonography, and the obsolete calibrations for the Schiötz tonometer.

The general impression is that there can be very few questions that one can ask about glaucoma without finding somewhere in this book some sort of answer or at least some indication of where help might be sought in the literature. Any book which does this is indispensable to the glaucoma research worker, and the author is therefore to be congratulated on the excellent result of his industry and knowledge.

JOHN GLOSTER

Blindness and the Electrical Activity of the Brain. Electroencephalographic Studies of the Effects of Sensory Impairment By L. A. NOVIKOVA. 1973. Pp. 341, 144 figs, 65 tables, bibl. American Foundation for the Blind, New York (\$5.75)

This is a translation of a book published in Russia in 1967. The first of the three sections is a clinical electroencephalographic study on visually impaired patients, both awake and asleep, deaf and deaf/blind patients, and patients with hemianopia. It is shown that the alpha rhythm is dependent on an acuity sufficient to discern shapes and that if it is lost the most pronounced activity shifts forward to produce a typical Rolandic rhythm. It is noted that a cyclical activity of 8-13 Hz is not necessarily an alpha rhythm and that the wave form as well as the frequency must be assessed.

The second section reviews EEG studies on young people with poor vision and cerebral damage. As poor visual acuity is associated with a diminished EEG potential, this change makes it difficult to assess coincident cerebral damage.

The third section is an experimental study in the rabbit.

This is an excellent book based on one of the better aspects of Soviet society: the care and education of the disabled allowing their co-operation in this study. The translation only occasionally irritates, for example, eye injury is termed 'damage to the peripheral part of the analyser'. There is a full bibliography and this gives an introduction to the extensive Russian literature in this



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John Gloster

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