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## Acquired colour defect under restricted viewing time: a new diagnostic technique?

SIR, I was interested in the article by S. P. Taylor.<sup>1</sup> His results are interesting in the demonstration that normal subjects under standard lighting conditions develop an apparent tritanomaly if their viewing time is restricted. In this series of tests he confirms some views already held—that colour vision may not recover after an episode of optic neuropathy, and that deterioration of colour vision does not precede observable diabetic retinopathy. Dr Taylor's careful planning of the series of tests has obviated any inherent defect in the City University Colour Vision Test as a test of colour vision. However, several observers<sup>2</sup> have shown this test to be unreliable, and it would be a pity if this were the only test relied on for clinical diagnosis.

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SIR, With reference to Dr Bronte-Stewart's letter I do not propose that the City University Colour Vision Test be used for clinical diagnoses on the basis of its classification of colour defects. The paper under discussion suggested that under conditions of reduced viewing time the response of control subjects, with no ocular pathology or inherent colour defect, is different from the responses of subjects suffering from ocular pathology. A change in colour vision with reduction in viewing time, in control subjects, has been found by the use of more sophisticated techniques of measurement of colour performance than the 'City' test.<sup>1–3</sup> The results of these tests do not confirm the 'City' diagnosis of a tritan defect. The 'City' colour test was in fact chosen for its ease of administration and not for its diagnostic ability.

I would agree that the 'City' test is not an adequate screening test, as has been suggested.<sup>4,5</sup> It is designed from the colours of the Farnsworth panel D-15 with additional chips to aid classification of defects, and on this basis alone it is simply a colour test to screen suitability for specific occupations where a moderate to severe defect would be a hindrance. It does not provide clear cut classifications and, even with the improvements in scoring technique that have been suggested,<sup>6</sup> it does not reach the screening standards of other tests. The above does not, however, preclude the use of the 'City' test as an indicator of change in colour vision.

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