CORRESPONDENCE

PRESERVATION OF THE ANTERIOR CHAMBER

To the Editorial Committee of the British Journal of Ophthalmology

Sirs—The preservation of the anterior chamber is of great importance in many surgical procedures inside it. Thus the discussion of cataracts, capsulotomies, removal of capsular tags after an extracapsular extraction, division of anterior synechiae, and goniotomy are all very easy with an intact anterior chamber, but very difficult when the anterior chamber is prematurely lost.

A device to reform the anterior chamber at will while working inside it, which could be incorporated in such instruments as the discission needle and the capsule forceps, would be of great assistance to surgeons.

I would suggest to the instrument makers to design these instruments with a hollow needle running through the body of the discission needle or through one of the arms of the forceps in such a way that its one end opens into the intra-ocular part of the instrument and the other can receive the end of a dropper filled with sterile normal saline and having a rubber teat.

It should be quite easy for the operator or his assistant to inject the required quantity of saline into the anterior chamber to reform it while operating.

Yours faithfully,

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3 September, 1957.

BOOK REVIEWS


Not very long ago a book on the visual pigments would be relatively small: to-day, although the subject is specialized and has attracted comparatively few research workers, the story is constantly becoming more complex and fascinating. Until recent years two pigments only were recognized: rhodopsin (visual purple) found in the rods of mammals, birds, amphibians, and marine fishes, and porphyropsin, found in fresh-water fishes; to-day quite a number of new and related pigments associated with the retinal rods has come to light, while the presumptive pigments associated with the cones are essentially unknown. The demonstration of the relation of one class of pigments with vitamin A1 and of the other with vitamin A2 has opened up a new chapter in biochemistry of more than usual interest and wide implications in which much still remains unsolved. The subject is a difficult one, partly because the pigments can be obtained only in minute amounts from a reasonable number of eyes, partly because they are so unstable, and partly because no simple solvent is known in which they can be easily manipulated. The usual chemical methods of study have therefore a limited application. Despite these handicaps, by deduction from diverse data, by inference, and sometimes by guess-work, our knowledge is growing apace.

This story is told in a lucid and interesting manner in the present volume by one who has spent many years in its study and has himself contributed largely to the rapid progress now being made. The most important of this family of pigments is visual purple, a chromoprotein, the molecule of which consists of a chromophore attached to a protein (or “opsin”). The chromophore is the reactive part of the molecule, responsible for the preferential absorption of light and the initial site of the photochemical changes. The protein acts essentially as a support and seems to vary from species to species. The chromophore belongs to the family of the carotenoids, and when exposed to light is broken down through transient orange intermediaries to the yellow retinene, and eventually to the colourless vitamin A1, a process which is reversible.
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Br J Ophthalmol 1958 42: 60
doi: 10.1136/bjo.42.1.60

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