a description of routine ocular conditions which can be viewed readily in the outpatient department, but it does not apply to specialised conditions like ocular tumours, and, as stated in the introduction to this book, the relative infrequency of many of these tumours precludes the average eye surgeon from becoming familiar with them, particularly during the various stages of their development. Such knowledge is essential in making an early diagnosis, which is so important in any form of malignant disease.

This book fulfils a great need, and the standard of the illustrations is extremely high. The short comments are entirely complementary to the illustrations. There is a fair balance between the roles of surgical treatment and modern methods of irradiation in the management of many of the conditions.

Relatively few criticisms need be made, but there is some confusion about the management of surface melanomas. The book indicates that a flat surface malignant melanoma may be treated by beta irradiation whereas a raised lesion should be treated by exenteration, though it is possible that this advice is limited to the fornices and the palpebral surfaces of the eyelids. In fact, however, it is extremely rare for a surface melanoma to assume malignancy without becoming elevated (a possible exception is cancerous melanosis of the eyelid—the lentigo maligna of Hutchinson). Indeed a junctional naevus is elevated in the absence of proved malignant change, so that elevation of a lesion is a doubtful means of determining the precise nature of the lesion and, therefore, the most effective method of its treatment. Exenteration is the essential measure in certain cases, but as a general rule irradiation should be carried out as a primary procedure, and a 'flat' surface which is appropriate for beta irradiation can be achieved when the bulk of the lesion is removed for biopsy.

The other criticisms are only trivial. Fig. 13 is to the left (rather than above) Fig. 12, and proper recognition should be made of George Coats, who contributed so much to ophthalmology in the relatively short age span of 39 years, by placing the apostrophe in the correct place, so that Coats's disease is not correctly described as Coat's disease, though to be less pedantic Coats' disease may suffice.

This book should be of distinct value to the practising ophthalmologist who sees cases of malignant disease of the eye infrequently.

PETER HANSELL


This paperback contains 1630 multiple choice questions, with answers in the last pages of the book, designed for undergraduate and postgraduate medical students. Their basic objectives are stated openly in the preface to be 'to reasonably master over the subject, to reproduce the knowledge in the examination and to get a suitable job through various competitive tests'.

The book would have been improved by a separate grouping of the questions into those suitable for the undergraduate, the postgraduate, and for both. I suspect that most British examiners would think that many questions were unsuitable for either. There is a surprising tendency to expect precise numerical answers, for example,

Sex incidence of dacryocystitis:
A 60 : 40 M : F
B 50 : 50 M : F
C 40 : 60 M : F
D 30 : 70 M : F
E 20 : 80 M : F

(E is the answer given)

or precise semantic knowledge. I have never met 'maderosis' and 'tylosis' used other than facetiously outside the covers of encyclopedic works. Candidates are expected to know the identity of eponymous structures like Hannover's, Sondermann's, and Petits' canal. I wonder how many experienced ophthalmologists who take a careful history would agree that refractive errors are a contributory or aggravating factor in migraine?

The MCQ seems to me to be less objective than its supporters claim—granted that fair assessment of an essay answer is not at all easy. Compiling a satisfactory MCQ is a very difficult art, and these authors are to be commended for making a brave attempt. However, we must continue our efforts in medicine to escape from teaching and examinations which encourage our students only 'to reproduce the knowledge in the examination'.

CALBERT I. PHILLIPS

Correspondence

The fishmouth phenomenon in retinal detachment

Sir, In his article Mr Colin H. Birchall mentions that Pruett concludes that the length of a limbus-parallel buckle and the shape of the implant or explant contribute to the pathogenesis of the fishmouth phenomenon. There is, however, an article he did not refer to that predates Pruett's article by 2 years. That article
Seasonal incidence of retinal detachment

Sir, The catchment area of the Princess Margaret Hospital, Swindon, is about 250,000 people. Between January 1973 and December 1979 (7 years) 140 patients were operated on for detached retina (all first operations). Twice as many occurred in the first 4 months of the year. There must be, as in any biological series, a monthly detached retina mean, the usual explanation being a combination of anatomical defects and physical stress. Is it possible that there is an additive due to heavy head colds? Maybe not, because November’s figures for the period reviewed were the lowest of all despite the fact that ‘November’s chill blows loud wi’ angry sugh’. Whatever the explanation, I always brace myself for a run of detachments after New Year, and it always happens.

Princess Margaret Hospital, F. C. RODGER
Swindon SN1 4JU.

Notes

All-India Ophthalmological Conference

The fortieth All-India Ophthalmological Conference will be held at Ravindra Nath Tagore Medical College, Udaipur, on 10–13 January 1981. Further details from Professor M. R. Jain, Ravindra Nath Tagore Medical College, Udaipur, Pin-313001, India.

Glaucoma symposium

The Israel International Symposium on Glaucoma will take place at Tel Aviv, Israel, on 3–5 September 1980. Details from the Secretariat, Israel International Symposium on Glaucoma, PO Box 16271, Tel Aviv, Israel.

Surgical aphakia

The Rochester Eye Institute and the Department of Ophthalmology at Park Ridge Hospital, Rochester, New York, will hold the fifth annual ophthalmic seminar on 15–16 August 1980 at the Rochester Americana Hotel. Details from Ms Katherine Sgabelloni, RN Co-ordinator, Ophthalmic Services, Park Ridge Hospital, 1555 Long Pond Road, Rochester, New York 14626, USA.

American Academy of Ophthalmology

The annual meeting has been rescheduled at Chicago’s McCormick Place on 2–7 November 1980. Further details from the American Academy of Ophthalmology, 1833 Fillmore Street, PO Box 7424, San Francisco, CA 94120, USA.

References

The fishmouth phenomenon in retinal detachment.

M Goldbaum

doi: 10.1136/bjo.64.5.383-b

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