Intraocular lens implants and risk of endophthalmitis

EDITOR,—We would like to comment on the paper by Bainbridge et al.1

The aim of their study was to investigate the possible association between the use of three piece foldable silicone polymethylacrylate intraocular lenses and increased risk of endophthalmitis, and indeed the investigators have met this goal and proved this association in an elegant study.

In addition, the authors have supplied the reader in their article with very important information (Table 1) that was not discussed. All of the seven cases had a medical history of one or more systemic diseases that may affect the immunological conditions of the patients and contribute to the development of postoperative endophthalmitis.1 In fact, one patient with plastic anaemia was excluded from the statistical analysis.

Comparing the patients with endophthalmitis with control subjects in a random fashion, even in small series, may reveal additional risk factors such as medical history. The addition of a controlled group of patients undergoing the same surgery who did not develop endophthalmitis could add a lot to the strength of the study.

We believe that endophthalmitis develops when several risk factors are present. We are obliged to take all these factors into consideration before, during, and after surgical procedure, especially in debilitated and immunosuppressed patients. In this kind of patient prophylactic considerations must be borne in mind, including adequate preparation of the patient and surgical field, antibiotics, experienced surgeon, safer instruments, and IOLS.

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Pupillary abnormality

EDITOR,—In a recent issue of the BJO, we had the opportunity to read the interesting case report on pupillary abnormality, by Malla.

The author reported a gross persistent pupillary membrane (PPM) in both eyes of a 33 year old Nepalese female. The patient was asymptomatic and near as well as distant visual acuity were normal. Although the author mentioned that the membrane bulged forward into the anterior chamber when the pupil constricted to light, it was not clear if the patient noticed any decrease in vision with bright sunlight after a precise questionnaire concerning this symptom. The visual acuity in our case under ordinary room illumination was 20/40 in both eyes. Nevertheless, when measured while the light of the indirect ophthalmoscope was shone into his eyes at an angle of 45°, visual acuity was surprisingly reduced to 20/100 in both eyes. Similarly, Kumar et al.2 also reported two cases (aged 15 and 17 years) of hyperplastic pupillary membrane presenting with marked decrease of visual acuity in bright sunlight. In the latter case, these authors recorded a reduction in visual acuity from 20/40 to 20/200 after instillation of pilocarpine eye drops or projecting the indirect ophthalmoscope light at a 30° angle.

It is widely accepted that asymptomatic cases of PPM usually don’t require excision beyond the sensitive period of amblyopia.3 Nevertheless, some cases presenting with significant visual loss in bright sunlight required surgical4 or Nd:YAG laser intervention. Besides visual acuity concerns, cosmetic and psychological disfigurement caused by PPM may also be considered as a reason for intervention in some patients.

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Reply

EDITOR,—I have just reviewed the patient with the bilateral persistent pupillary membrane. Visual acuity both for distance and near remained unchanged (6/6 partly and N5 in each eye) with pupils constricted by shining the light of an indirect ophthalmoscope at an angle of 45°. The patient has no visual complaints and is unaware of any decrease in vision in bright light.

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“Cyclodiode”

EDITOR,—I read with considerable interest the paper by Spencer and Vernon8 on the results of a standard protocol for translentic diode laser cyclophotocoagulation (“cyclodiode”). The particular importance of this article with regard to more widespread use of this therapy lies in the high percentage (64%) of treated eyes with pretreatment Snellen acuity, and while a third of these eyes lost 2 or more lines of Snellen acuity, it appears from this series, not directly attributable to the cyclodiode treatment, with particular note being made of the low rate of postoperative macular oedema.1

The authors report success rates in achieving IOP control with a standard protocol, but, as in most other published series, record findings after “repeat as necessary” retreatments (in this study up to five in number). While this is of obvious interest to clinicians, it may be of almost equal utility to know the effect of a single treatment. In an earlier paper, also using a standardised treatment protocol for cyclodiode treatment, an attempt was made to elucidate any dose-effect relation from single cyclodiode treatment session. With a single treatment totalling 90 J through 360°, a mean lowering of IOP of 48% was achieved, but the predictability of outcomes in this series was hampered by the high number of neovascular glaucoma (NVG) cases, which are recognised as having highly variable responses.3 It would seem that Spencer and Vernon are uniquely placed—with their standard protocol and low numbers of NVG cases—to provide data pertaining to any dose-effect relation from a single treatment, information which may be used to enhance the predictability of the procedure for individual patients.

The authors also note that their cohort was largely free of cases having had previous cyclodestructive procedures: that is by definition not true, however, of all the retreatment cases, and the authors appear not only to have been reasonably forthright in their pursuit of an IOP <22 mm Hg, but also to have applied the same laser dose irrespective of the number of retreatments, with their retreatment plan leaving no untreated quadrant. In the series noted above, using a half standardised single treatment (45 J over 180°) for cases judged clinically to be at risk of hypotony (which included cases having had previous cyclodestructive procedures) a mean IOP reduction of 36% was still achieved.4 It would therefore be of great interest to know whether any cases in Spencer and Vernon’s paper were excluded from retreatment, despite inadequate postoperative IOP control, because of a concern about possible hypotony; similarly, it would be useful to know whether “all comers” were treated in the study—to know whether there were specific exclusions from standardised cyclodiode treatment because of this perceived risk.

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"Cyclodiode"
Is non-arteritic anterior ischaemic optic neuropathy related to homocysteine?

**Editor—**We thank Dr Walland for his interest in our paper¹ which was published following our paper’s submission. It is difficult to quantify the dose-effect from a single treatment in cyclodiode because (a) it would depend on the follow up period as the effect may diminish with time and (b) one would have to continue all the prelaser antiglaucoma medications (not always desirable) to see the true effect.

However, we can analyse the “single dose effect allowing for a reduction of medications” from our study by examining the results of only those eyes which had one treatment session (32). This subgroup contained seven primary open angle glaucoma, five aphakic, two pseudophakic, sevenuveitic, three corneal/PK, four rubeotic, one silicone oil, and three trauma cases, thus representing the whole spectrum of the cohort treated. Although this subgroup, by definition, selects out the “best case scenario”, this was achieved in over 50% of cases treated. With a mean follow-up of 32 months, the IOP in this subgroup decreased from a mean of 31.2 mm Hg to a mean of 16.2 mm Hg, with a 45% mean percentage reduction. This was associated with a reduction in numbers of patients taking acetazolamide from 88% to 6% and a mean medication usage from 2.2 to 1.2. None of these results differs significantly from those of the whole cohort.

In our study no eyes were denied treatment or retreatment because of a perceived risk of hypotony, and “all comers” were indeed treated by this modality if enhanced filtering surgery was considered contraindicated. It may be of interest to know that 71% of the cases were referred to our service from other consultant throughout our region (population approximately six million). We cannot state that all eligible cases were treated by us, but we believe our cohort is likely to be representative of cases referred to other glaucoma specialists with a similar population to that found in the East Midlands of England.

We note that, in Walland’s study, the mean power of IOP at a mean of 10.4 monopolar with 25.8 mm Hg with only 55% <22 mm Hg even when a “full” treatment of 90 J was delivered. Although this may be as a result of the large numbers of patients with neovascular glaucoma in this group, it may also be due to the time and power output settings used (1.5 seconds and 1.5 W). With our settings of 2 seconds and 2 J per spot, it was not possible to control IOP with a 45.7% reduction using a mean of 1.7 treatments in our neovascular subgroup. Reducing the output per shot, as in Walland’s study, may result in a reduction in treatment effect overall despite higher total energy delivered. This could be due to transmission attenuation in certain eyes, operator technique variation, probe output differences, and ciliary process uptake/susceptibility factors.

**STEPHEN A VERNON
ANNE FIONA SPENCER**
Department of Ophthalmology, University Hospital, Nottingham

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**Reply**

**Editor—**We thank Biousse and colleagues for their comments on our article and their corroborative study. We agree that an extensive hypercoagulable evaluation is not warranted in patients with NAION who have typical risk factors, including older age. The yield from such an evaluation in young patients with NAION, especially those without known risk factors or those who suffer recurrent events, still needs further elucidation.

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**Laser pointers: not to be taken lightly**

**Editor—**We recently treated a 16 year old boy whose friends exposed both his eyes to a laser beam alternately for 20 seconds from a distance of around 1 metre in the course of horseplay with a key chain laser pointer (class 3A diode, 670 nm, maximum output 5 mW). Immediately thereafter, his vision was blurred bilaterally and he noted a red central scotoma in each eye. These symptoms resolved spontaneously within 2 days. An eye examination performed 3 days later disclosed that his vision and visual fields were normal, but there were retinal pigment epithelial disturbances which appeared in fluorescein angiography as recurrent thrombotic events or a family history of thrombosis, or if there is no disc at risk in the fellow eye in a younger patient without vascular risk factors, an investigation for hereditary and acquired thrombophilic markers may be justifiable.

This study was supported in part by a departmental grant (department of ophthalmology) from Research to Prevent Blindness, Inc, New York, New York, by core grant P30-EY03620 (department of ophthalmology) from the National Institute of Health, Bethesda, Maryland. Dr Kerrison is a recipient of Research to Prevent Blindness Lew R Wasserman Merit Awards.

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a window defect type hyperfluorescence in both eyes close to the fovea. The macular burns persisted throughout an 8 month follow up period. The literature describes two cases of unilateral macular damage from laser pointers (class 2 diode, 670 nm, maximum output 1 mW and class 3a diode and 670 nm, maximum output 5 mW), 1 and two other cases of bilateral decreased vision due to large retinal photocoagulation scars from class 3a laser pointer. 2

In his review of the safety of laser pointers, Marshall 3 comprehensively described the classification of the lasers according to hazard. However, no small part of the message of his piece was a letter to the Lancet that were unmistakably designed to placate the reader into believing that laser pointers are harmless. After witnessing the persistent injury to our own patient and reading the reports of four others who were likewise hurt by this device, we are appalled. The laser pointer is not an innocent toy. It damages the eye and should not be made freely available to youngsters whatever its strength, while the label of the laser pointer light into an eye.

Media “hype” underpinning reports in the popular press and the pernicious avarice of individuals lurking in wait for opportunities to claim compensation for spurious injury seem to have galvanised estimable individuals to rush to the defence of this instrument. We contend that laser pointers which are regarded as being “safe” carry the risk of potential damage to the eyes and that more such cases will be detected once physicians are alerted to this possibility. We believe that the public must be instructed in the safety measures that need to be taken when using the laser pointer and that they be made aware of the potential hazards associated with improper use. We recommend that use of laser pointers in public should be controlled and that closing devices should be kept away from children.

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BOOK REVIEWS


The fourth edition of this standard text lives up to its enormous reputation. Jack Kanski sets out “to provide the trainee with a systematic and easily assimilated introduction to ophthalmology and a reference and update for the more experienced practitioner”. Undoubtedly these clear and circumscribed aims are well met in this beautifully and even more lavishly illustrated text. In addition to covering all those aspects of ophthalmology and ocular surgery, a new chapter on ocular trauma has been added in addition to descriptions of new surgical techniques and some pruning of outdated material.

This is and has been an extremely successful primer text for the trainee ophthalmologists and one might ask why this book rather than the many other texts available. Perhaps the answer lies in part in the approach taken with this text. It is very patient oriented: one can almost envisage the author examining the patient presenting to the ophthalmic clinic by starting systematically at the front of the eye and working his way posteriorly towards the orbit and/or cortex until he finds the source of the patient’s complaints. There is less emphasis on why the patient might have his complaints than finding out what exactly the problem is and what the practitioners can do about it. As such, it works very well because it is concise but sufficiently detailed and above all immediately accessible. In fact there is a remarkable amount of detail (see, for instance, the section on corneal dystrophies) while one could debate occasional diagnoses attached to some of the fundus photographs (see, for instance, serpiginous choroiditis). There are also some very helpful line diagrams such as those included in the retina and orbit chapters. The section on neuro-ophthalmology contains several excellent illustrative radiological scans. Overall this is an excellent starting text. If there is any criticism that can be levelled at this classic text, it is that it leaves this reader thirsting for further information. If a similar effect is induced in the trainee ophthalmologist it will have achieved its aim. I can therefore recommend this book as essential reading.


This is an important and thought provoking book which should appeal not only to those within the medical profession but also by interested parties such as health economists and government officials whose responsibility it is to set budgets for healthcare programmes. I think it will also be of great interest to the lay public. The practice of medicine is as susceptible to the whims of fashion and pervasive ideology as any other human activity. It is therefore interesting to investigate how these fashions occur. J Le Fanu has had a background in medical and scientific journalism, having spent time on the staff of the Daily Telegraph, one of the UK’s broadsheet newspapers. His thesis is that despite the significant advances in tackling disease, which reached their peak in the post-war years, the promise of modern medicine as we are at the end of the century has failed to materialise. In fact, Le Fanu contends that much of the advances in the first half of the 20th century were accidental or at best serendipitous, citing as examples the discovery of antibiotics, which was never predicted, or the use of chloroquine for rheumatoid arthritis, which was based on clinical observations of patients treated for malaria. Even the success of aggressive chemotherapy for childhood cancer was the result of a determined but empirical approach of testing systematically multiple drugs in combination. The same approach has now been shown to be successful in the treatment of AIDS where three or more drugs are more successful than one. This “success” is not based on scientific knowledge, despite the vast amount that has been discovered about the AIDS virus, but simply on a “suck it and see” approach.

In contrast, the great promise of the new genetics or of the social theory of disease has not held up according to the author. The amazing strides in our knowledge derived from molecular biology led to the rapid acceptance of the possibilities of gene therapy but these have emphatically failed to deliver, despite the intellectual satisfaction that these smart ideas generate. Similarly, in the wake of studies showing a clear epidemiological correlation between smoking and lung cancer the social theory has sought to link almost any disease for which there is not an obvious infectious cause to some lifestyle or nutritional source mostly blamed on Western society. Le Fanu firmly believes that many errors at the feet of a few individuals who inveigled themselves into influential positions—for instance, in the American Medical Association, and with the support of the major drug companies—which have alarmingly changed our lifestyles to the point where the vast majority of healthy individuals are worried more about their health than ever before while being encouraged to ingest drugs such as cholesterol lowering drugs. Despite this there is little evidence that they will actually do for the individual what the statistics tell us to prevent the individual patient from dying of a heart attack. Le Fanu suggests that it would be possible to rectify this situation overnight by closing down all university departments of epidemiology. Ophthalmology has not been immune to these problems (see the revised recommendations concerning laser treatment for diabetic patients with clinically significant macular oedema and 20/20 vision, Arch Ophthalmol 1999; 117:675). This book is not a sustained attack on modern medical practice nor is it written purgatively to debunk all of modern medicine’s fashions. It has been written, I think, to call a halt to the bandwagon which produces contradictory statistical theories for the cause of disease and to instil a little circumspection in the scientists who are so often so unrelentingly to translate these into new cures for disease. The book does contain implicit and sometimes explicit criticism of medical scientists who selectively present evidence to fit their hypotheses, transgress the bounds of scientific theory and who then promulgate these in a way that alters people’s lifestyles. In particular, the book has much to say about the dangerous part played by the major pharmaceutical companies in medicine. Many who read this book will be able to relax about their imputed health problems, to feel confident about their ability to ward off many of the supposed hidden dangers which face them out there, and to take much of what they hear from the medical pundits with a pinch of salt. The author offers hope for the future and, in particular, calls for a return of the experienced physician who exercises good clinical judgment, with a dash of common sense.
NOTICES

Community participation in eye health and trachoma and the SAFE strategy

The latest issues of Community Eye Health (nos 31 and 32) discuss community participation in eye health (issue 31) and trachoma and the SAFE strategy (issue 32). For further information please contact Community Eye Health, International Centre for Eye Health, Institute of Ophthalmology, 11–43 Bath Street, London EC1V 9EL. Tel: (+44) 171 608 6909/6910/6923; fax: (+44) 171 250 5307; email: eyeresource@ucl.ac.uk Annual subscription £25. Free to workers in developing countries.

Residents’ Foreign Exchange Programme

Any resident interested in spending a period of up to one month in departments of ophthalmology in the Netherlands, Finland, Ireland, Germany, Denmark, France, Austria, or Portugal should apply to: Mr Robert Acheson, Secretary (residents’ foreign exchange programme), European Board of Ophthalmology, Institute of Ophthalmology, University College Dublin, 60 Eccles Street, Dublin 7, Ireland.

VIIIth Mediterranean Ophthalmological Society

The combined meeting of the VIIIth Mediterranean Ophthalmological Society and the VIIIth Michaelis Symposium on Ocular Circulation and Neovascularisation will be held in Jerusalem on 21–26 May 2000. Further details: Secretariat, c/o Unitours Israel Ltd, PO Box 3190, 61031 Tel Aviv, Israel (tel: +972-3-529099; fax: +972-3-5239099; email: meetings@unitours.co.il).

The VIIIth Michaelis medal and award will be delivered on 24 May 2000 in Jerusalem. The medal and award ($15 000 monetary prize) are sponsored by the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities and by the Hadassah Hebrew University Hospital and Medical School of Jerusalem, Israel. Nominations are sought from the ophthalmic community at large. Suggestions for choice and CV highlight should be sent to Professor David BenEzra, Secretary for the International Nominating Committee, Pediatric Ophthalmology Unit, Hadassah Hebrew University Hospital, PO Box 12000, Jerusalem 91120, Israel.

5th International Vitreoretinal Meeting–IV 2000

The 5th International Vitreoretinal Meeting–IV 2000 will be held in Parma, Italy, on 26–27 May 2000. The main topics will include “Hypotony and glaucoma in vitreoretinal surgery”, “Internal limiting membrane surgery”, “Macula oedema”, “Open globe surgery”, “Internal limiting membrane surgery”, “Papilloedema”, and “News in retinal pigment dysplasia”. The meeting will be held at the auditorium, University Eye Clinic, Schleischastrasse 12, 72076 Tuebingen, Germany. Further details: WT-Wissenstransfer, Universität Tuebingen (tel: +49 7071 29 76439; fax: +49 7071 29 5051; email: wit@uni-tuebingen.de).

30th Mediterranean Ophthalmological Symposium

The 30th Mediterranean Ophthalmological Symposium entitled “The Ageing Macula” will be held on 13–15 September 2000 at St John’s College Cambridge. Chairman: Professor Alan Bird. Further details: COS Secretariat, Cambridge Conferences, The Lawn, 33 Church Street, Great Shelford, Cambridge CB2 5EL (tel: 01223 847464; fax: 01223 847465; email: a.bashworth@easynet.co.uk).

European Association for Vision and Eye Research (EVER)

The European Association for Vision and Eye Research (EVER) will be meeting on 4–7 October 2000 in Palma de Mallorca, Spain. Further details: Secretariat EVER, Postbus 74, B3000 Leuven, Belgium (fax: +32 16 33 67 85; email: EVER@med.kuleuven.ac.be).

Fifth Annual Meeting of the Association for Ocular Pharmacology and Therapeutics

The Fifth Annual Meeting of the Association for Ocular Pharmacology and Therapeutics will be held on 2–5 November 2000 in Birmingham, AL, USA. Further details: Dr Michael J Bartlett, OD, Department of Optometry, University of Alabama at Birmingham, 1716 University Blvd, Birmingham, AL 35294-0010, USA (tel: 205-934-6764; fax: 205-975-7052; email: Jb Bartlett@icare.opt.uab.edu).

12th Afro-Asian Congress of Ophthalmology

The 12th Afro-Asian Congress of Ophthalmology (Official Congress for the Afro-Asian Council of Ophthalmology) will be held on 11–15 November 2000 in Guangzhou (Canton), China. The theme is “Advances of ophthalmology and the 21st century”. Further details: Professor Lezheng Wang, Eye Center, SUMS, New Building, Room 919, 54 Xianlie Nan Road, Guangzhou 510060, PR China (tel: +86-20-8760 2402; fax: +86-20-8777 3370; email: lwuicv@gzsums.edu.cn).

Singapore National Eye Centre 10th Anniversary International Congress

The Singapore National Eye Centre 10th Anniversary International Congress will be held in conjunction with 3rd World Eye Surgeries Society International Congress on 2–4 December 2000 at the Shangri-La Hotel, Singapore. Further details: The Organising Secretariat, 11 Third Hospital Avenue, Singapore 168751 (tel: (65) 2277255; fax: (65) 2277290; internet: www.snec.com.sg).

The Hong Kong Ophthalmological Symposium '00

The Hong Kong Ophthalmological Symposium '00 will be held 4–5 December 2000, in Hong Kong, China. Further information: Miss Vicki Wong, Room 802, 8/F Hong Kong Academy of Medicine, 99 Wong Chuk Hang Road, Aberdeen, Hong Kong (tel: (852) 2761 9121; fax: (852) 2715 0089; email: cohk@netvigator.com).

VIIIth Tuebingen Angiography course

The VIIIth Tuebingen Angiography course with wet lab will take place on 9 September 2000 in the auditorium, University Eye Clinic, Schleischstrasse 12, 72076 Tuebingen, Germany. Further details: WT-Wissenstransfer, Universität Tuebingen (tel: +49 7071 29 76439; fax: +49 7071 29 5051; email: wit@uni-tuebingen.de).
Is non-arteritic anterior ischaemic optic neuropathy related to homocysteine?

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