Book reviews

Reading Aids for the Partially Sighted: A Systematic Classification and Procedure for Prescribing. LOUISE L. SLOAN. 1977. Pp. 150, figs., tables, refs. Williams & Wilkins, Baltimore (\$11.95)

The study of motivation is properly the territory of the psychologist. Every ophthalmologist and every low-vision practitioner must have pondered on how 2 patients presenting clinically very similarly can differ in their response to loss of vision—one coping well, maintaining many, if not all, his activities, the other losing mobility, employment, and often nearly all pleasure in life. What is an inconvenient impairment in some produces a major disability in others.

The management of the patient with a visual disability is a relatively new subspecialty, and many different disciplines are contributing to it. The selection of suitable appliances may be in the hands of ophthalmologists or ophthalmic opticians or dispensing opticians according to local circumstances. Dr Louise Sloan is unique among practitioners in being a psychologist. This background has affected her complete approach to the subject. Starting by listening and watching, she avoided the trap of 'knowing better' and giving patients sophisticated and unmanageable solutions to straightforward problems. Dr Sloan became one of the great innovators of the American low-vision field by the simple expedient of finding out what the patient could cope with and then supplying it, and if no such device existed she persuaded someone to produce it. Stand magnifiers, little used previously, have, due entirely to her influence, taken the proper important place in the armamentarium. Normal testing equipment did not suit her either, and she developed her own systems based on newsprint size. Her influence is clearly discernible in low-vision clinics throughout the USA and further afield too.

Dr Sloan has now produced a book that describes reading aids, suggests a systematic classification of them, and outlines a procedure for prescribing. The book is described in the preface as a 'simple introductory text', and in Chapter 2, 'Non-technical explanation of basic optical principles', Dr Sloan achieves the astonishing feat of making optics readable, comprehensible, and even enjoyable. This chapter appears to be an improved version of half of a previous manual, *Recommended Aids for the Partially Sighted*, first published in 1966, and while the genealogy of the remainder is fairly clear it has been revised, updated, and expanded.

Reluctantly one must take issue with Dr Sloan on some points. With no formal training in ophthalmology or optometry she feels subjective refraction to be sufficient. Few children of 5 to 8 years (the optimum time of first referral to a low-vision clinic) can give a reliable subjective response, nor do they normally hold reading material at 40 cm, yet Dr Sloan bases all calculations on this +2.50 as 'the conventional reading distance'. It is,

however, refreshing to find near-vision ranges recorded metrically; it certainly makes the sums easier, as British authorities have long known. Further, Dr Sloan produces a compelling argument for all measurements of power to be in dioptres or equivalent. Later in the book she suggests that there should be standardisation of terminology and testing equipment and nominates the Lighthouse for the Blind in New York to organise this—based, of course, on her own system. Such rationalisation would be a great advantage, but this reader would prefer an international organisation modelled, perhaps, on the Comité International de l'Eclairage, and not restricted to any one system.

A definitive statement from Dr Sloan was long overdue. This book competently and readably settles the account.

JANET SILVER

The Miracle of Vision. By ARTHUR S. FREESE. 1977. Pp. 181, figs., refs. Harper & Row, London (£4.50)

The title and blurbs prepared one for yet another journalistic foray, with sensational 'break-throughs' and other vulgarities to which booklets explaining medicine for lay audiences are prone. The word 'miracle' does indeed keep turning up. There is the usual pious insistence, on 'eye care', implying that our eyes, like teeth, can well be destroyed by inattention and have survived the millennia of neglect only by (yet another) miracle. But otherwise the book is factually sound and admirably restrained. It includes a lot of enjoyable titbits—about our natural 48-hour circadian cycle and our extraretinal light responses, how congenitally blind girls start menstruating earlier, and so on. It is readable, lively, accurate, and brief, and is in fact about the best layman's book on ophthalmology that I have encountered.

P. D. TREVOR-ROPER

Current Diagnosis and Management of Chorioretinal Diseases. Edited by F. A. L'ESPERANCE. 1977. Pp. 573, figs., refs. C. V. Mosby, St. Louis (Henry Kimpton, London) (£50.80)

In the autumn of 1975 the International Photocoagulation Congress met in New York. This book is a record of the papers delivered, but it is much more than a mere transcription. Each paper has been carefully prepared for publication and stands as an authoritative statement of the views of the contributor on his particular subject at the time of the congress.

The book covers the diagnostic and clinical aspects of those fundus diseases customarily treated by photocoagulation, as well as the technical and practical aspects of treatment. The text of 560 pages is profusely illustrated, particularly from histological preparations and retinal photographs including fluorescein angiography. It is

divided into 6 parts, entitled 'Instrumentation and pathology', 'Peripheral retinal diseases', 'Diabetic retinopathy', 'Macular diseases', 'Complications of photocoagulation therapy', and 'Advanced technical uses of photocoagulation'.

Most of these titles are self-explanatory, but the last conceals 17 contributions which include important material on anterior segment laser treatment, particularly for glaucoma, and on the treatment of vascular retinopathies and tumours.

The quality of the contributions is high, as might be expected of a group of internationally recognised experts, and though their contributions often overlap this is an advantage, giving depth and vitality to the subject and avoiding a rigid didactic presentation. By the nature of the conference the book cannot be a comprehensive guide to all aspects of fundus disease, but it gives a real insight into the current clinical practice in those areas where photocoagulation is employed coupled with an understanding of the physics of photocoagulation energy and of the ensuing pathology. These basic subjects are essential to an intelligent and safe use of photocoagulation, either by xenon arc or laser.

The editor is to be congratulated on a most useful contribution to current clinical practice. The book can be confidently recommended to all ophthalmologists working in this field, whether as pupils, practitioners, or masters.

DAVID W. HILL

Stereoscopic Atlas of Macular Diseases, Diagnosis and Treatment. By J. D. M. GASS. 1977. Pp. 411, figs., tables, refs. C. V. Mosby, St. Louis (Henry Kimpton, London) (£52)

The second edition of this atlas has made its appearance some 7 years after the first. The organisation of the chapters has been retained, but there has been added a final section on photocoagulation in the treatment of macular disease.

During the past 6 years there have been marked advances in the classification of diseases of the macula and many separate entities are now recognised, although their aetiology and pathogenesis often remain in doubt. No ophthalmologist, however, can afford to neglect the morbidity which is produced by diseases of the macula, particularly in the second half of life, and this volume charts this area in detail with the help of an abundance of illustrations. It is a monument of careful observation and thoughtful interpretation on the road to a deeper understanding and control of an affliction shared more widely as the longevity of the population increases.

STEPHEN MILLER

Handbook of Ophthalmologic Emergencies. 2nd edition. GEORGE M. GOMBOS. Pp. 291, figs., tables, refs. Henry Kimpton, London (£8.25)

The second edition of this handbook, like the first, provides a comprehensive account of the diagnosis and management of most emergencies likely to be encountered by an ophthalmologist and is directed mainly towards ophthalmologists in training. The book is excellently laid out for both reference and reading, with frequent

practical summaries on management. The section on ocular trauma is particularly good and bears the stamp of first-hand experience gained by the author during the six days' war in Israel. At the end of the book there is a section on ophthalmic radiology and neuro-ophthalmological emergencies. My only criticism is that the quality of the photographs does not match the excellent text.

J. H. RAMSAY

Manual der Tonographie für die Praxis. WOLFGANG LEYDHECKER. 1977. Pp. 115, figs., tables, refs. Springer-Verlag, Berlin (DM18.80)

This is essentially a practical handbook of tonography, and it is reviewed here as such without entering into any of the long-standing arguments about the clinical value of tonography and the relative merits of different tonographic tests. Such problems receive relatively brief consideration, especially towards the end of the book, and not unexpectedly the author puts forward his own opinions throughout the volume.

As a practical guide to the performance of tonography it is very good. It gives the right amount of elementary anatomy and physiology to introduce a technician to the method, and it goes into the theoretical basis of tonography in sufficient detail to interest the ophthalmologist. There are numerous photographs of two pieces of tonographic equipment which help to make clear how they should be used. The need to prepare the patient and the eyes carefully and adequately for tonography is described, and the importance of this preparation is properly emphasised. The correct procedure is described well and in detail and a lot of sound common-sense advice is given. Mistakes are relatively easy to make in tonography, but the common ones are described in words and pictures. The assessment of the tonographic tracing and the calculations therefore also receive attention.

If you feel that you need to do tonography then this small book will certainly be of value in showing how the test should be done. The style of writing is straightforward and the reading is not difficult for anyone with some knowledge of the German language. J. GLOSTER

Note

Ophthalmic microsurgery

Two courses in ophthalmic microsurgery will be held at Moorfields Eye Hospital (City Road branch) this year—the first on 7–9 June, the second on 25–27 October. They will be conducted by the Department of Clinical Ophthalmology and will be practical courses concerning the application of the operating microscope to common ophthalmic surgical procedures. Applications are invited from consultants, senior registrars, or those overseas holding equivalent positions. *Applications for the June Course should be received by 29 May.* Application forms and further details may be obtained from Mrs J. F. Field, Microsurgical Course Secretary, Department of Clinical Ophthalmology, Moorfields Eye Hospital, City Road, London EC1V 2PD.