Viscoelastic agents in ocular surgery

SIR,—Lavin and Khaw have drawn attention to the use of viscoelastic agents for improving visualisation during ocular surgery.¹ One problem that occurs is when during ocular examination or surgery the internal view is obscured by phenylephrine epitheliopathy.² A use for hydroxypropylmethyl cellulose (HPMC) 2%, not mentioned by Lavin and Khaw, is when during ocular examination or surgery the internal view is obscured by phenylephrine epitheliopathy.^{2,3} Application of a layer of HPMC 2% or sodium hyaluronate to the cornea results in a marked improvement in corneal clarity, which may be enough to prevent epithelial debridement having to be performed.

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- 1 Lavin MJ, Khaw PT. Use of viscoelastic agents to aid visualisation during ocular surgery. *Br J Ophthalmol* 1990; 74: 192.
- 2 Edelhauser HF, Hine JE, Pederson H, Van Horn DL, Schultz RO. The effect of phenylephrine on the cornea. *Arch Ophthalmol* 1979; 97: 937-47.
- 3 Machemer R, Aaberg TM. *Vitrectomy*. 2nd ed. In: Machemer R, Aaberg TM, eds. New York: Grune and Stratton, 1979: 33.

Reply

SIR,—We did not specifically mention phenylephrine epitheliopathy when we outlined the

use of hydroxypropylmethylcellulose (HPMC) to prevent corneal opacification, but would fully agree with Mr Stevens. In our experience the use of HPMC does improve the view through the cornea which may otherwise be obscured by topical drug induced epitheliopathy. With the use of HPMC on the cornea we have never had to perform an epithelial debridement on an eye with eyedrop-induced epitheliopathy during cataract surgery.

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