MAILBOX

Anterior uveitis and its relation to stress

EDITOR,—I admired Mulholland *et al*'s study¹ into whether stress is a trigger for recurrences of acute anterior uveitis (RAAU). They conclude that it does not, but I wonder if this conclusion would have been strengthened by the use of a more appropriate control group.

A more suitable control group to answer the question of whether stress is a trigger for RAAU would consist of people with RAAU whose disease was quiescent. Instead, they used other eye casualties who may well have been under a different level of stress from people with inactive RAAU going about their daily business. Indeed, the trend that they highlight for 19-39 year old men with active RAAU to have higher Spielberger state-trait anxiety inventory (STAD) scores than published normals, is also present in the trait score of similar controls.

Casualty controls had higher life event scores (average 80.1) than patients with active RAAU (average 67.54). The authors state that the RAAU score was not higher than controls, but with no statistical comparison. Is this because the control's life event score was in fact significantly higher? I would be interested in their response.

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1 Mulholland B, Marks M, Lightman SL. Anterior uveitis and its relation to stress. *Br J Ophthalmol* 2000;84:1121-4.

Reply

EDITOR,—I was pleased to see that Mr Beare admired our paper. The patients with RAAU attended the casualty department within 1-3 days of their attack and the events assessed in the questionnaires were, over the previous month, looking for a significantly increased occurrence of stressful events that could be involved in triggering a recurrent attack. They were therefore walking around quiescent for most of the relevant time looked at in the study.

There was no significant difference ($p>0.05$) in our controls compared with those from other published studies matched for age and sex as detailed in Tables 3 and 4 and Figures 1 and 2 in our paper. All studies of this kind report large standard deviations, as does this one, and it is important not to overinterpret results that are, in fact, non-significant, however interesting a trend might be.

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BOOK REVIEW

The Wisdom of the Eye. By David Miller. Pp 169; £29.95. San Diego: Academic Press, 2000. ISBN 0-12-496860-0.

This relatively short single authored book states that its aim is to "survey the major

concepts underlying many of the findings of the basic sciences relating to the human eye and visual brain". The justification for this is given that the explosion of information in the field of basic eye and vision research prevents eye clinicians, students, and scientists from other fields being aware of them. The author is quite clear that he intends to use everyday language to describe theoretical and laboratory concepts. The book is divided into two major parts, the first is entitled "The Eye", in which the subchapters are The Young Eye, The Image Of The Adult Human Eye, Eyes Of Different Animals, The Healing Eye, Refractive Errors Of The Human Eye: A Sociologic Viewpoint, and Eye Communication. The second section is devoted to the visual brain with chapters entitled Creating Visual Stories and Illusions Around The Retinal Image, Brain Sharpening Of The Retinal Image, Coloring The Retinal Image And Awareness Of The Retinal Image. Does this book succeed in its stated goal? Without any question I believe it does not. First and foremost, no book that fails to discuss molecular biology and the current state of genetics as it applies to ophthalmology can be seen as a serious effort to communicate with other physicians, students, and scientists with regard to vision research findings. Moreover, the brevity of the book does not allow the author to go into any great detail about many topics; indeed, some topics are described in such short detail that they are badly misrepresented. For example, on page 162 the description of blind sight experiments consists of just a few sentences and leaves the reader to believe that a significant number of patients with damage to the visual cortex can consistently identify objects from the so called blind field. This grossly misrepresents an area of research that has occupied hundreds of investigators over the past decade or so. Similar is the statement that the visual cortex is plastic enough that patients who have been congenitally blind use neurons in the visual cortex for the sense of touch. This is presented as a single sentence and the citation to justify this point of view is not a primary scientific publication. Finally, and in my mind, most seriously, most of the references to be found at the end of the chapters of this book are older than five years. Considering how short the half life is of new information in the field of vision research no serious attempt to present an overview of vision research could depend on so many references that are clearly outdated.

Having stated the above, however, I want to recommend that this is a book that every ophthalmologist, medical student, and vision scientist can thoroughly enjoy. It is an absolutely good read. It should be viewed not as the author views it as a review of basic eye and vision research but as a relatively straightforward description of the phenomenology of the eye, vision, and the visual brain. It is clearly written and in most cases beautifully illustrated. Regrettably, some of the black and white illustrations, particularly those taken from a secondary source, are unclear. If the author does revise the textbook, one hopes that these illustrations will be improved in subsequent editions. This is a book that can be easily read in a single sitting and, at the end of doing so, the reader is left with a renewed awe for the visual system. The author is to be commended for producing a book that is just plain fun to read.

CREIG HOYT

NOTICES

Vision 2020: cataract outcomes

The latest issue of *Community Eye Health* (35) discusses cataract surgery outcome. 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) (0) 20-7608 6909/6910/6923; fax: (+44) (0) 7250 3207; email: eyeresource@ucl.ac.uk) Annual subscription £25. Free to workers in developing countries.

Second Sight

Second Sight, a UK based charity whose aims are to eliminate the backlog of cataract blind in India by the year 2020 and to establish strong links between Indian and British ophthalmologists, will be sending volunteer surgeons to India early in 2001. Details can be found at the charity website at www.secondsight.org.uk or by contacting Dr Lucy Mathen (email: lucymathen@yahoo.com).

Call for papers—6th European Forum on Quality Improvement in Health Care, 29-31 March 2001, Bologna, Italy

Further details: BMA/BMJ Conference Unit, BMA House, Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9JP, UK (tel: +44 (0) 20 7383 6409; fax: +44 (0) 20 7383 6869; email: quality@bma.org.uk; website: www.quality.bmj.org).

Office of Continuing Medical Education

A symposium "Randomised trials in ophthalmology: past, present, future" will be held 2-3 April 2001 at the Thomas B Turner Building, Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Baltimore, Maryland, USA. Further details: Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, Office of Continuing Medical Education, Turner 20, 720 Rutland Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21205-2195, USA (tel: (410) 955-2959; fax: (410) 955-0807; email: cmenet@jhmi.edu).

XXV Detachment Course

The XXV Detachment course, retinal and vitreous surgery, will be held in Poznan, Poland on 5-6 April 2001. Further details: Professor Krystyna Pecold, Katedra I Klinika Okulistyki, ul Długa 1/2, 61-848 Poznan, Poland (tel/fax: 004861-8527619) or Professor Ingrid Kreissig, Univ-Augenklinik, Schleichstrasse 12, D-72076 Tuebingen, Germany (fax: 49-7071-293746; email: ingrid.kreissig@uni-tuebingen.de).

Optometry 01

Optometry 01 will take place on 21-23 April 2001 with more than 100 events—lectures and workshops—at the Atrium Gallery, NEC, Birmingham, UK. Further details: tel: 0207 261 9661; email: info@Optometry01.co.uk; website: www.optometry01.co.uk.

14th Annual Meeting of German Ophthalmic Surgeons

The 14th Annual Meeting of German Ophthalmic Surgeons will be held in the Meistersingerhalle, Nuremberg, Germany on 17–20 May 2001. Further details: MCN Medizinische Congress-organisation Nuremberg AG, Zerzabelshofstrasse 29, 90478 Nuremberg, Germany (tel: ++49-911-3931621; fax: ++49-911-3931620; email: doerflinger@mcn-nuernberg.de).

European Association for the Study of Diabetic Eye Complications (EASDEC)

The next meeting of the European Association for the Study of Diabetic Eye Complications (EASDEC) will be held in Paris, France, on 19–20 May 2001. Further details: Colloquium, 12 Rue de la Croix Faubin, 75 557 Paris Cedex 11, France (tel: +33-1-44 64 15 15; fax +33-1-44 64 15 10; email: s.mundler@colloquium.fr).

2nd Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Treatment of Autoimmune Disorders 2001

The 2nd Interdisciplinary Symposium on the Treatment of Autoimmune Disorders 2001 will take place on 7–9 June 2001 at the University Hospital, University of Kiel, Kiel, Germany. Further details: Prof Dr Med Michael Sticherling, Department of Dermatology, University of Kiel, Schittenhelmstrasse 7, D-24105 Kiel, Germany (tel: +49-431 597 1512; fax: +49-431 597 1611; email: msticherling@dermatology.uni-kiel.de).

14th World Congress of the International Society for Laser Surgery and Medicine

The 14th World Congress of the International Society for Laser Surgery and Medicine is to be held on the 27–30 August 2001 at Sri

Ramachandra Medical College and University Hospital, Chennai, India. The American Society of Lasers in Medicine and Surgery has indicated that it will designate the 14th World Congress of ISLSM as its society's co-sponsoring meeting. A pre-conference course and separate sessions in ophthalmology will be held as a part of this international meeting. Further details: Dr B Krishna Rau, President, 14th World Congress of the International Society for Laser Surgery and Medicine, Department of Surgery, D2 Ward, Sri Ramachandra Medical College and Research Institute, Porur, Chennai - 600 116, India (tel: 91-44-4765856, 4768027-28, 8527776, 8594804; fax: 91-44-8594578, 4767008; email: krishnar@giasmd01.vsnl.net.in and website: www.medindia.net/islsm2001).

American Institute of Ultrasound in Medicine—Millennium Ultrasound Course Series

A course entitled "Obstetrical and Gynecological Ultrasound" will be held in New York City, NY, on 24–26 August 2001. Further details: Stacey Bessling, Public Relations Coordinator, AIUM, 14750 Sweitzer Lane, Suite 100, Laurel, MD 20707-5906, USA (tel: 301-498-4100; email: sbessling@aium.org).

31st Cambridge Ophthalmological Symposium

The 31st Cambridge Ophthalmological Symposium will be held 3–5 September 2001 at St John's College Cambridge. The subject is Retinal Detachment. Further details: COS Secretariat, Cambridge Conferences, The Lawn, 33 Church Street, Great Shelford, Cambridge CB2 5EL, UK (tel: 01223 847464; fax: 01223 847465; email: b.ashworth@easynet.co.uk).

4th International Conference on the Adjuvant Therapy of Malignant Melanoma

The 4th International Conference on the adjuvant therapy of malignant melanoma will be held at The Royal College of Physicians, London on 15–16 March 2002. Further details: Conference Secretariat, CCI Ltd, 2 Palmerston Court, Palmerston Way, London SW8 4AJ, UK (tel: + 44 (0) 20 7720 0600; fax: + 44 (0) 20 7720 7177; email: melanoma@confcomm.co.uk; website: www.confcomm.co.uk/Melanoma).

XXIXth International Congress of Ophthalmology

The XXIXth International Congress of Ophthalmology will be held on 21–25 April 2002 in Sydney, Australia. Further details: Congress Secretariat, C/- ICMS Australia Pty Ltd, GPO Box 2609, Sydney, NSW 2001, Australia (tel: +61 2 9241 1478; fax: +61 2 9251 3552; email: ophthal@icmsaust.com.au; website: www.ophtalmology.aust.com).

International Society for Behçet's Disease

The International Society for Behçet's Disease was inaugurated at the 9th International Congress on Behçet's Disease. Professor Shigeaki Ohno represents the ophthalmology division (Department of Ophthalmology and Visual Sciences, Hokkaido University Graduate School of Medicine, Sapporo, Japan: tel: +81-11-716-1161 (ext 5944); fax +81-11-736-0952; email: sohno@med.hokudai.ac.jp). The 10th International Congress on Behçet's Disease will be held in Berlin 27–29 June 2002. Further details: Professor Ch Zouboulis (email: zoubbere@zedat.fu-berlin.de).