BOOK REVIEWS


It is generally accepted that metastatic spread of an infection from elsewhere in the body cannot account for all the clinical manifestations of uveitis; some disturbance of the immunological responses of the uvea has been considered an essential part of the inflammatory response. The aim of this Symposium was to examine and discuss the clinical and experimental findings concerning uveitis in the light of modern knowledge of immunopathology.

After a general review of experimental studies on allergic responses and direct infections, the anatomical similarities between the connective tissue of the eye and that of the joints are discussed. This is followed by papers on the origin of antibodies, with particular reference to the local formation of antibodies in the eye; the role of gamma-globulin in rheumatoid arthritis; the mechanism of tissue damage at the site of antigen–antibody reactions; hypersensitivity reactions in the eye, with particular reference to sympathetic ophthalmitis and lens-induced inflammations; a virus disease of dogs (infectious canine hepatitis) which is often accompanied by a uveitis, and, finally, the changes which take place in the mast cells during experimentally induced uveitis.

Each paper is followed by a discussion. Perhaps wisely, no attempt is made to draw definite conclusions from the discussions, and the reader is left to follow the arguments and form his own judgement on their validity. Apart from the evidence that phaco-anaphylactic endophthalmitis and sympathetic ophthalmitis may coexist, the clinician will find little help in the management of his patients. Research workers in the field of uveitis and immunopathology will, however, find much to interest and stimulate them.


The first of a series of four or five symposia conducted by the Ciba Foundation on the sensory functions was concerned with colour vision; and a fascinating meeting it was, comprising 26 participants from Britain, America, Scandinavia, Switzerland, Venezuela, and Japan. The range of subjects was wide, including the microstructure of the retina, the visual pigments, colour vision in man and its genetics, colour vision in animals, and lines of future research.

One of the most fundamental and interesting questions which arose was the doubt cast upon the separate existence of two distinct types of receptor cells, rods and cones. This was raised from the anatomical point of view by Pedler; after the study of the photoreceptors and their immediate connexions in the outer plexiform layer of twenty-four animal species, including man, with the electron microscope, he concluded that the concept of the “rods” and “cones” of the light-microscopists no longer fitted the facts. It is also significant that Crescitelli of Los Angeles found a coherent picture of duality in the retina of the gecko which has been generally accepted as containing only rods; there were two photopigments, two spectral sensitivity functions, and two components in the electro-retinogram. Dartnall pointed out that a whole array of photopigments has now been discovered in the animal kingdom and those found in rods and in cones show no chemical or physical property to distinguish them. In this connexion it is interesting that Marks of Baltimore has now found three pigments each in different cones of the goldfish and man, all of the rhodopsin type, a finding which is interesting in the light of Young’s original trichromatic
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theory of colour vision. An interesting feature of the symposium is the importance now attached to the study of colour vision in animals. It is true that in this type of experiment subjective evidence is lacking, but behavioural experiments are now very rewarding and the eye itself can be made available for chemical study. Altogether, the book is full of interest, particularly in showing the present trends of research in the subject and the prospects the future may bring.


All of a sudden it comes to life, this wretched subject of colour vision, ephemeral, useless, time-wasting, hard to follow, and unprofitable. Step by step we are led first across the familiar territory of colour vision theory, then to the examination-hall problem of classification of defects. Gently rising, we reach the elementary genetics of defects. Here there is a hint of the value of tests other than the Ishihara tables (pinched from Stilling’s, it would appear), there an innuendo that what the patient thinks he sees is right. On we climb past instruments old and new, plucking plants of mistaken diagnosis (how can there be a pathology of colour vision if the normal is still unknown?), swinging from branches of family trees at one or two loci, and lo! colour vision helps us to understand Klinefelter’s syndrome. See how it illuminates the crooked paths of chromosomal abnormalities! We are all useful in this game—unless we are bastards. Why, colour vision even fulfils a social function, like an accent or a public school, for a slight anomaly therein may ban you from some occupation, and if you have artistic tendencies you’ll stock etchings rather than oil-paintings in your room. The book is provocative and will be even more valuable when the fundamentals of retinal function and its pathology have begun to be understood.


This is a record of the papers read at the First International Symposium on the Diagnostic Use of Ultrasound in Ophthalmology. There are contributions on theoretical aspects of the use of ultrasound in general and representative accounts of the optical and clinical work at present in progress in Europe and America. Time-amplitude methods predominate and intensity-modulated techniques receive scanty attention.


A short guide on medical treatment of eye diseases based on the wide experience of a single individual and backed by the traditions of a large teaching department is always valuable reading. In chapter after chapter dealing with diseases of the particular parts of the eye, its adnexa, glaucoma, etc., we are given sound advice, eschewing the costly, complicated, and ephemeral. It is pleasing to learn that in spite of antibiotics such remedies as silver nitrate and copper sulphate still have a place in ocular therapy, and injections of milk are not quite outmoded. We would have liked to see more emphasis given to herpetic corneal affections which nowadays loom so large in our practice, but apparently there is no sure remedy yet available for this evil. Of IDU, which seemed to promise so much but has lost much of its lustre, the author has no first-hand experience. In uveitis, scleritis, etc., belonging to the “rheumatic” eye complications Butazolidin treatment is highly thought of. We are reminded that we must look for the underlying causes, and attack them with the appropriate weapons when ascertained, but not to forget the possibly allergic character of many cases of uveitis. Here corticoid therapy comes in as a last stand, with which not all will agree. The author warns against therapeutic nihilism in cases of retinopathy, thrombosis of the retinal vessels, and optic neuritis, and invites close co-operation with other specialties. The proprietary drugs listed and described in the Appendix have trade names current in East Germany, but can be easily translated into western equivalents; the elaborate dispensing formulae so beloved in Central Europe will be lost on Anglo-Saxon readers. All in all, a very useful book.