Book reviews


The arrival of the long-awaited third edition of this famous Textbook will be welcomed by all ophthalmologists, neurologists, and neurosurgeons. It is a particular pleasure that the senior author (in his 73rd year) has accomplished this task, and has introduced a dedicated and distinguished colleague who will nurture it for the benefit of future generations of neuro-ophthalmologists.

The third edition retains the general pattern of its predecessors, but has been completely re-written and brought up to date. The size has been increased to 3,000 pages, and the text has been divided into three volumes, a comprehensive index of 72 pages being included at the end of each volume. The subject matter is presented with clarity and depth and all recent work of importance is included. The whole book has been made more readable by the omission of many of the illustrative case histories and the inclusion of the authors' opinions on certain subjects. The illustrations have been painstakingly collected to complement the erudition of the text, and in a few cases the presentation of an important clinical point is enhanced by subtle and humorous undertones.

Volume I is made up of seven chapters which discuss the sensory, motor, and autonomic systems, congenital anomalies, and hereditary disorders, and includes a chapter on the optic nerve head. The chapter on the visual sensory system is a review of modern neurophysiology and stresses certain aspects such as the concepts evoked by the work of Hubel and Wiesel in Boston. Similarly the chapter on the ocular motor system comprises an excellent review of this subject including a section on abnormalities of the eyelids. Clinicians may, however, be disappointed that Gerlier's disease merits two paragraphs whereas vertical nystagmus is ascribed but three lines. An excellent chapter on the pupil merits study by all clinicians who use this compact system for measurement and diagnosis.

The remaining chapters retain the highest academic standard and include discussion on the nature of chromosomal anomalies, inborn errors of metabolism, neurolipidoses, and the pigmentary retinopathies. The chapter on the optic disc is well illustrated and the classification of disc oedema recommended here could well eliminate some of the present confusion.

Included in Volume II are chapters on metabolic and toxic diseases, the disorders of muscle, and extensive chapters on infectious diseases, and vascular and circulatory disorders. The chapter on disorders of muscle gives wide coverage of this increasingly complex subject, with a consideration of the current status of progressive external ophthalmoplegias; it introduces many conditions such as nemaline and central core myopathy with which few ophthalmologists are familiar. The chapter on infectious diseases includes 76 pages on syphilis, but also stresses recent advances of importance such as the aetiological implications of Dawson's subacute sclerosing encephalitis.

The final chapter on vascular lesions is especially recommended owing to the quality of the radiographs, photographs of pathological specimens, diagrams, and fundus photographs.

The final volume discusses tumours, trauma and hypoxia, neurotoxic substances, and the ocular signs of neurasthenia, hysteria, and malingering. The chapter on tumours includes a section on the phakomatoses, and this is followed by descriptions of tumours of the eye, the orbit, and the central nervous system. Systemic conditions with orbital involvement (e.g. lymphomata) and their management are fully described, so that further recourse to a textbook on medicine is unnecessary. Cranio-cerebral trauma and hypoxia constitute a chapter which will be of particular value to paediatric ophthalmologists, but should be read by all those who have to deal with head injuries. The final chapter on neurotoxic agents comprises a formidable list, ranging from barbiturates to Barracuda poisoning, and closes with concepts of “multidimensional neuropathology”.
This textbook is of the highest calibre; it is as vital for the ophthalmologist with an interest in neurology as for the neurologist with ocular interests, and serves to emphasize the common ground of these two specialties. The elaboration of the science of neurophysiology, biochemistry, and genetics, and the introduction of electron microscopy, pupillography, and electromyography makes this text an excellent launching pad for the next decade. The breadth and depth of the subject matter and the extensive bibliography make this work the definitive reference book on neuro-ophthalmology for all libraries, ophthalmic hospitals, and ophthalmic departments.

The main disadvantage is the exorbitant price (£5.50) which will put this textbook out of the range of many prospective purchasers. Furthermore, the size and weight (19 lbs) make transportation difficult and will restrict its use either to libraries or to the confines of the study.

However, without reservation, I recommend an investment in this book which will impart to the owner some of the enthusiasm and fascination for this unique specialty, which has inspired the authors throughout their Herculean venture.


The book is divided into two main sections. The first opens with a description of the factors governing the preparation of drops and ointments with general considerations such as drug penetration and toxicity. It is pointed out that most eyedrops and ointments used in the United States are now commercially prepared and sold already packaged in suitable containers, droppers, etc.

Several chapters deal with the principles of the main types of therapy: steroids, antibiotics, and agents acting on the autonomic nervous system. Following this is a series of chapters dealing with the therapy of the principal ocular diseases from an anatomical and pathological point of view. Thus there are, for example, chapters on diseases of the lids, conjunctiva, and lacrimal apparatus, and on glaucoma, infections, and optic neuritis.

The second section comprises an alphabetically arranged list of all the usual drugs encountered in ophthalmology with pharmacological notes on each.

This is a valuable work of reference which every ophthalmologist would appreciate in the consulting room and it is particularly recommended for hospital residents who need quick access to accurate and well-advised information on their many therapeutic problems. One of the most pleasing things about the book is the wealth of factual material, such as the dosage and mode of administration of drugs.


One method of keeping abreast of current developments in one's subject is to attend symposia on specialized topics or to read the papers presented at such symposia. The New Orleans Academy of Ophthalmology organized a symposium on the retina and retinal surgery in 1968, emphasis being placed on the practical aspects of this subject. The 22 papers which were presented, and the roundtable discussion which followed, cover several aspects of retinal surgery in which recent advances have been made.

Several speakers discussed the examination of the peripheral retina and vitreous, and the various forms of degeneration which may occur in these structures, while the several techniques for producing choroido-retinal adhesion were discussed and compared. The current management of difficult types of retinal detachment (giant retinal breaks, massive preretinal fibroplasia, diabetic detachment) are described and it is encouraging to read that these types, which until recently were considered virtually untreatable, are now amenable to therapy, albeit complicated therapy at times.

As Schepens indicated in his paper on the evolution of concepts related to retinal detachment, we have come a long way since Gonin's original work on the sealing of retinal breaks. Anatomical