Book reviews


The reader of a new textbook must read carefully the preface and title, which indicate the author's intentions. In this instance "Contact Lenses" is stated to have been written to serve the needs of the British contact lens practitioner and to supply basic information for the student. In the United Kingdom the majority of contact lens practitioners are opticians and therefore the text is written by a group of authors who, for the most part, are ophthalmic opticians and/or university teachers of ophthalmic optics. There is no doubt that the majority of chapters admirably supply basic information for the student. If one must complain, then, it would be to criticise the "shopping-list" style adopted in some chapters. When one considers the balance of the contents a few observations must be made. The first chapter on "Physiology and Anatomy" is essentially a library text and contains almost too many references. This chapter will prove, in parts, difficult for the student to read or to apply to contact lens practice, but will be of great value to postgraduate students as a source of material. Chapters on the use of drops and solutions may appear elementary to the medical practitioner, but for the optician are possibly a necessity.

The enigma remains that contact lens theory does not always explain contact lens function. The chapter on "Corneal Lenses" tends to pose the question but, in my opinion, begs the answer. Human tolerance for these appliances is, in many instances, the saving grace. It explains why so many different forms of contact lenses are in use. This chapter covers very satisfactorily all modern concepts in back-curvature forms. One cannot fault the optics or the Appendix of Tables.

For a first edition the book is surprisingly free of printers' errors. The one that attracted my attention is the statement that in slit-lamp microscopy the magnification is up to x 100. Certainly in clinical ophthalmology, we are using a maximum of half this amount. For the seasoned contact lens practitioner, the practical part of this text may not be sufficiently deep to stimulate thought. Possibly the scanty attention given to soft lenses is deliberate and is not a great omission for the undergraduate student, since the basic principles underlying the lens have still to be evaluated. Such a rapidly changing discipline as soft lenses is therefore either best dealt with broadly or contained in a few paragraphs as in this text. The print, layout, diagrams, and photographs are of a high order, although they emanate from several authors. It is perhaps a text that will find its greatest acceptance by the student optician and for that important function it can be safely recommended.


Every year the number of scientific journals increases, making it more difficult to keep up to date with the advances which are made in the different branches of ophthalmology. Recently, there have been several attempts to simplify the situation by the publishing of review books and journals largely devoted to critical reviews. An important addition to this has been the printing of the papers and discussions presented at general or specialized symposia.

The Proceedings of the 21st International Congress held in Mexico in 1970 continue on this pattern. Major sections deal with the pathology of the occipital lobe, ocular embroyopathies, and symposia on glaucoma, paediatric ophthalmology, cryosurgery, macular disease, therapies, and ocular electron microscopy. In addition, there are large collections of papers assembled under various anatomical or pathological divisions.

Although they contain nothing startlingly new, these two volumes summarize the present position in many different branches of ophthalmology with contributions from a galaxy of international experts.