Book reviews


The last decade has seen a rapid increase in the use of intraocular lenses for the management of aphakia. New materials, new lens forms, new techniques, and revised indications are put forward almost daily, and the ophthalmologist has often to keep a cool head during this bombardment. This comprehensive, well-illustrated book goes a long way towards sorting out some of the confusion that has been created by these rapid developments and is to be thoroughly recommended. Its value is enhanced by the excellence of its illustrations. There are photographs and simple diagrams throughout, so that the book serves not only as a discussion on the history and basic principles of intraocular lens implantation but also as a manual of surgery describing the different operative techniques that need be applied for the individual lens forms. Although the author's bias towards intraocular lenses is obvious, the contraindications and complications are discussed fairly and in depth, and the bibliography is comprehensive.

One has to come to expect high standards from German ophthalmic textbooks, and this volume is no exception. It should be essential reading for all eye surgeons, not only those committed to this new branch of surgery.

T. J. FFYTCH


This volume constitutes an important contribution to eye research and contains 6 authoritative articles. Two of these, by Piatigorsky and by Varma, deal with lens metabolism, one (Church) is concerned with cell genetics, another (Laing) with specular microscopy of cornea, and the last two (Copeland and Sivak) deal with comparative aspects of ophthalmology.

Piatigorsky presents a constructive and wide-ranging review of the relationship between lens crystallin synthesis and intracellular electrolytes and inclines to the view that changes in the latter may lead to severe alterations in protein metabolism and possibly to cataract formation. Varma also deals with cataractogenesis but, in this case, the specific role of aldose reductase in diabetic cataract, and he includes useful information on possible therapeutic uses of flavonoids. In a most interesting article Church discusses the basic principles of somatic cell hybridisation and its application to ophthalmological research, and one hopes that further work in the field will be stimulated. Laing describes the various techniques of specular microscopy as applied to the cornea and indicates how it may be used to obtain quantitative information on cell morphology and tissue fluorescence.

The 2 articles on the long neglected subject of comparative ophthalmology make one realise (a) that much may be learned from studying lower forms of animal life and (b) that once there was a journal (Archiv fur vergleichende Ophthalmologie), published in the early part of this century, devoted entirely to this topic. Copeland describes in great detail the blood supply of the choroid and lentiform bodies in 2 species (Salmo gairdneri and Fundulus grandis) as related to the pseudo branch and discusses the way in which these structures serve the nutritional requirements of the retina. In the final article Sikov works on a much broader canvas when he surveys accommodation in vertebrates and deals mainly with developments which have taken place since 1942, when Walls published his book on The Vertebrate Eye and its Adaptive Radiation.

Taken all in all, this is one of the most interesting books I have seen for some time and one which it has been a pleasure to review. It should certainly be available in any institution seriously devoted to eye research, and one hopes that the same high standard will be maintained in future volumes.

D. F. COLE


Although a great deal of work has gone into the writing of this book, the reader will find it hard to warm to it. And who, by the way, is the reader? He is one who wants to learn the principles of refraction as a clinical discipline in the context of optics, ocular physiology, and visual psychophysics with pathophysiology and pharmacology added for good measure. At £47 the book may be confidently said to fall into the Sylva of overkill because it has sought to avoid the Charybdis of relevance. I am all in favour of the abandonment of 100% contrast test targets and of teaching both the novice and the old hand modern ideas of contrast sensitivity as they relate to ocular resolving power, a task attempted in this book—yet, alas, not achieved. But what is the point of dwelling on the technique of visually evoked responses when its value in refraction measurements is referenced once and not illustrated at all? Talking of references, why list papers in the extensive bibliographies if there is no textual contact with them? Is this why five secretaries had to be employed and the price of the book adjusted accordingly?

No one is going to convince your scribe that a manual of refraction needs over 700 pages. What we are presented with is an attempt to supplement Adler without his catholicity and Davson without his critical insight. In case the above opinions sound a little on the churlish side, let me add that Professor Michaels succeeds in this in so far as some of his illustrations are concerned. But the concession is wrenched from one's pen with difficulty if one is asked to stomach a passage such as the following:

'Presbyopia is an irreversible optical failure, an unexplained evolutionary blunder that comes as a psychological shock. The patient over 40 sees his reading vision dim. Soon, he imagines, the muscles will weaken, the skin shrivel, the hand shake, the mind totter, and only an empty shell remain. In fact, there is considerable discrepancy between chronologic age and ciliary muscle function [sic]. Although presbyopia means . . . vision of old age, it is a poor term for today's life span. Even its onset cannot be exactly defined, for it depends on the length of the arms, the pliability of the neck, the elasticity of the ego [Young's modulus?], and the geographic latitude. . . .


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Accommodation is neither overage, underage, or average, though some writers have extrapolated amplitude curves to life expectancy. This only proves that anyone can misapply the law of probability, so true in general, so fallacious in particular.

It also proves that there is no limit to the to which some writers subject uncomplaining sheets of paper.


The introduction of computerised tomography as an investigative procedure has necessitated a reorientation of the radiologist’s knowledge of anatomy. The images obtained by this technique define structures section by section and in the latest scanners can be displayed in 3 dimensions. This atlas demonstrates sectional anatomy of the head and neck in 4 planes; axial, semiaxial, coronal, and sagittal, and is intended as an anatomical guideline for CT studies. In addition to photographs of anatomical sections made from the cadaver, radiographs of the sections are also included. These are the most informative of the illustrations, which, in spite of their excellence of reproduction, on the whole do not always give adequate detail either in the anatomical sections or in the corresponding CT scans.

Although the CT scans of the gross head and neck anatomy correlate well with the anatomical specimens, detail in such regions as the petromastoid, larynx, and orbit is inadequate. Clearly these areas require separate treatment both by CT and in corresponding anatomical studies, and should not be dealt with as part of general head and neck scans. The work is therefore likely to be useful to the general neuroradiologist or neurologist concerned with brain scanning, but could not be recommended to the ophthalmologist dealing with orbital CT, or for that matter the radiologist concerned with ear, nose, and throat problems.


This book is a compilation of papers presented at the 17th meeting of the International Society for Clinical Electrophysiology of Vision held in Erfurt in 1979. Since the meeting was held in East Germany, papers from Russia and the Eastern block are well represented and thanks to careful translation and editing are clearly readable. The first part of the book, on ‘Visual electrodiagnosis in systemic diseases’, deals with several papers on the electoretinogram (ERG) in chronic nephropathy together with other papers relating changes in the ERG to vascular disease in the eye. In the second part of the book can be found some interesting new ideas on the use of the laser stimulus to produce local ERGs, and there are also more papers on the relationship between the stimulus field and the visual evoked response.

The volume provides a useful collection of papers for anyone interested in the field as well as a good source of references.


Beginning with a very readable introduction to the history of oculary pathology by Norman Ashton, the body of the book is divided into 5 sections dealing with developmental, degenerative, and dystrophic lesions, with inflammatory disease, with ocular involvement in systemic disease, with tumours, and with several miscellaneous conditions. Each is preceded by a useful synopsis from the editors succinctly surveying the milestones in the topics selected for discussion. The sections themselves consist of reprinted articles from the literature written by some 50 distinguished ophthalmic pathologists, many of whom, it is good to report, continue to be active in the field. To single out names would be invidious.

I have found this a most difficult book to review. Not because of any complaint with the component parts, since, as is to be expected in a book of this sort, the quality of the articles chosen for inclusion is beyond reproach. No, the difficulty arises in determining to whom the book is addressed. Composed for the most part of papers written within the last 25 years and still readily available in the original, there would seem little reason to go to the trouble and expense of obtaining this separate publication. Apart from devotees of the subspecialty of ophthalmic pathology I doubt very much whether the generality of ophthalmologists will find this compilation of gems of compelling virtue. This judgment may be a little harsh, especially on the editors, for whom the putting together of the book has clearly been a task dear to their hearts, but I cannot help the feeling that here is a book which is beautifully dressed but has nowhere to go.


This book uses a modification of the familiar ‘E’ game to test colour vision with pseudoisochromatic plates. It is described as being useful for testing children and other illiterates and as being suitable for testing by nonophthalmologists. It is simple to use and can approximately grade the severity of red/green colour blindness. It is a quick screening test, and the ophthalmologist may find it a useful addition to the tracing plates of the familiar Ishihara test.


The 1980 Year Book has made its usual early appearance and is a worthy successor to previous editions. A précis of recent advancements in particular aspects of ophthalmology serves as an introduction to the main chapters. The aspects discussed are orbital rhabdomyosarcomas, development of the geniculo-cortical pathways, extended wear contact lenses, conjunctival biopsy for sarcoidosis, refractive keratoplasty, the mechanism of resistance to aqueous outflow, intra- versus extracapsular extraction, birdshot retino-