

Book reviews

Metipranolol. Pharmacology of Beta-blocking Agents and Use of Metipranolol in Ophthalmology. Edited by H-J MERTÉ. Pp. 170. DM.68.00. Springer-Verlag: Wien. 1984.

This booklet reproduces the papers presented at the first Metipranolol Symposium held in Berlin in January 1983 to mark the launch of a new topical beta blocker for glaucoma treatment. The original German edition was published late the same year, and this review is of the English edition published in 1984.

The symposium has 16 listed speakers; all are German. The papers presented included three introductory papers on the principles of pharmacology and drug trials, two papers on short-term clinical trials using metipranolol, three papers comparing metipranolol and timolol, and two 'long-term' studies of metipranolol drops. It would appear that metipranolol is a non-cardioselective beta blocker without intrinsic sympathomimetic activity. It is marketed in concentrations of 0.3% and 0.6% and is administered twice daily. The 0.3% is equally potent with timolol 0.25%. The studies in this book show that a 30% reduction in intraocular pressure can be expected in the short term, but there is a falling off of this hypotensive effect to 20-25% after four weeks of treatment. It would appear that the drops produce a greater incidence of ocular irritation than timolol, although the reason for this was not clear to the authors reporting it.

Metipranolol, on the basis of the information included in this booklet, would appear to be an alternative beta blocker to timolol without clear advantages over the latter drug. The booklet itself would be of interest to ophthalmologists with a subspecialty interest in glaucoma and/or ocular pharmacology and therapeutics.

ROGER A HITCHINGS

Molecular and Cellular Basis of Visual Acuity. Cell and Developmental Biology of the Eye. Edited by S ROBERT HILFER AND JOEL B SHEFFIELD. Pp. 184. DM 98.00. Springer-Verlag: Berlin. 1984.

I usually think that symposium issues serve no other function than to provide a publishing medium for otherwise unpublisable papers. Nothing is more infuriating than picking up a volume with an extremely exciting title only to find a number of dissociated and discordant papers of varying scientific content and integrity. It is therefore a pleasant surprise to discover this series on the cell and developmental biology of the eye. The present volume is the third, and it certainly keeps up with its predecessors in terms of scientific merit of its component papers. The editors have done an extremely good job in choosing experts in their field and then in guiding them in such a way that the papers form a cohesive unit.

The molecular and cellular basis of visual acuity does precisely what its title suggests. It considers the cellular and molecular mechanisms underlying visual acuity and its development. It is particularly helpful to have a number of

modern reviews of both chemistry and anatomy and the interrelationships between these two fields. This collection of review articles also provides a wealth of references for the reader who is new to the field. If the book has a failing, it is that it does not cover the changes in visual acuity with the increase in age. However, I am sure that this area will be addressed in a future symposium issue.

In summary, I commend the editors and the authors for producing an extremely useful and timely book.

JOHN MARSHALL

ACTA 24th International Congress of Ophthalmology, San Francisco, 1982. Vols. 1 and 2. Edited by PAUL HENKIND. Pp. 1379. £142.50. Harper and Row: London. 1984.

This work in two volumes comprises 1274 pages of original papers, plus sections on the regulation of instruments and devices, the International Agency for the Prevention of Blindness, and the International Committee for Teaching and Postgraduate Education. In the preliminary addenda of volume 1 are some notes on various matters including the minutes of the meeting of the International Federation of Ophthalmological Societies, where the reports of various committees were considered. There is also a list of the names of the approximately 10000 ophthalmologists attending the congress.

The scientific papers are arranged in sections by subjects, starting with genetic eye diseases and congenital abnormalities followed by ultrasound perimetry, trachoma, cornea, cataract and anterior segment surgery, retina and vitreous, uveitis, glaucoma, diabetes, other systemic diseases, strabismus, tumours and plastic surgery, injuries, contact lenses, optics and refraction, and electrophysiology and visual psychophysics. The book is evidently the result of much hard work by its editorial chief. To assemble this enormous mass of literary material from such a diversity of sources and from such a large number of individual ophthalmologists in so short a time and to weld it into two very presentable volumes is a marvellous achievement. Paul Henkind and his editorial committee are much to be congratulated.

It is appropriate that the first paper in the volume should be a major contribution from the late Jules François: a fitting last offering to the international ophthalmological community. Although we are all sad to have lost Jules it was good that he lived to enjoy the largest ophthalmological congress ever held.

REDMOND SMITH

Documenta Ophthalmologica Proceedings Series 39. Colour Vision Deficiencies VII. Proceedings of the International Symposium, Geneva 1983. Edited by G VERRIEST. Pp. 424. £51.00. Junk: The Hague. 1984.

As was only to be expected, the vigorous momentum of the subject of acquired chromatic defects could not be kept up. It now occupies a quarter of the latest volume of this remarkable series. Far from being a complaint, this change of emphasis is mentioned in order to stress that the width of interest is much expanded. A section on new aspects of fundamentals is followed by practical matters, with special