Retinal Detachment: A Colour Manual of Diagnosis and Treatment. By JACK J KANSKI. Pp. 161. £29·50. Butterworth: Sevenoaks, Kent. 1986.

The 10 chapters of this book have a fast and punchy presentation characteristic of the author's style. There are numerous helpful lists in the text, which is highlighted by boxed notes and linked by explanatory paragraphs. Although not specifically referred to in the text there are ample end-of-chapter references for further reading. There is an immensely satisfactory index for quick reference.

The book is beautifully laid out and the production is of exceptional quality. The style of presentation is particularly effective in certain parts of the book. Thus I especially liked the section devoted to examination of the retina, where the current principles of technique are very well described. Conversely, in this type of presentation it is sometimes difficult to produce adequate explanation of principles which are going to influence the choice of treatment. For example, although there is description of periretinal membranes, it is hard for the reader to decide how the presence of these membranes, by their effect on the retina to which they are intimately related, affects the management of the retinal detachment. From a purely factual point of view I found that comments about the role of vitrectomy in retinal detachment surgery, aphakic detachment, and uses of intraocular air are unsatisfactory. There are a few inaccuracies—for example, macular tears are exceptionally rare, and snail-track and lattice degeneration are rarely found together.

I think that the use of ultrasonography might have been mentioned, particularly in relationship to its role in the diagnosis and character of retinal detachment when there are opacities in the media of either a transient (e.g., vitreous haemorrhage) or permanent nature (e.g. cataract). The pictures by Tarrant are of a superb standard, although I did not, for example, consider that the illustrations of subretinal fibrosis and traction detachment were typical examples. In the main the colour photographs in the operative section were also excellent. It is nice to see a mention of some of the modern problems confronting the retinal surgeon. For example, there were useful hints on the management of detachment in the presence of intraocular lenses.

All in all this is a splendid book, and it is packed full of gems of knowledge. It is particularly suited for training ophthalmologists reading for an examination and, with its large number of colour illustrations, is very reasonably priced. I thoroughly enjoyed reading it and wholeheartedly recommend all my colleagues to do the same. A H CHIGNELL

An Outline of Ophthalmology. By ROGER L COAKES AND PATRICK J HOLMES SELLORS. Pp. 195. £7·95. Wright: Bristol. 1985.

This excellent compact book is written principally for medical students and has an interesting symptomatic approach to eye disorders. It contains a large amount of information, very well organised into five principal sections on symptoms and two sections based on the eye in systemic disease and ophthalmic investigations with treatment. Profuse black-and-white illustrations accompany the text.

There are some very valuable sections in the book, and I particularly liked those on optical aids, diagnostic tests, and ocular toxicology and was amused by the list of common misconceptions. (About the only omission here was 'Won't my cataract be removed with the laser-beam?'.) My only criticism is that, whilst most of the photographs are eminently clear, some of them would have been much better in colour.

I would thoroughly recommend this book to all medical students. I think it will find a useful place in most casualty departments and general practices as a quick reference for the diagnosis of eye symptoms, and I am sure it will prove useful to nurses and opticians. RONALD J MARSH

Heredity and Visual Development. Eds. JOEL B SHEFFIELD AND S ROBERT HILFER. Pp. 214. DM 164·00. Springer-Verlag: Berlin. 1985.

The Eighth Symposium on Ocular and Visual Development was devoted to exploring current knowledge on the structural and functional bases of genetic eye diseases, a major objective of these symposia being to foster communication between basic scientist and clinician. Of the eight papers presented here five are on retinal dystrophies, both in animal models and in humans, and review large areas of basic research into this important group of disorders. The papers by Bolton and Marshall and by Ripps and his colleagues can be particularly recommended.

Melanin in the fetal retinal pigment epithelium probably determines the chiasmatic pathway choice made by growing axons; hence the abnormality seen in animal and human albinos. Studies of the early development of central visual pathways in normal and albino ferrets support this hypothesis.

Recombinant DNA technology was used to study hereditary cataract in animal models, which may be associated with a reduction or absence of a specific crystallin, while monoclonal antibodies were used to identify the unusual glycoprotein in the cornea of patients with Groenouw's macular dystrophy.

This is an interesting group of review articles by basic scientists who have made an appreciable attempt to be understood by clinicians. It would be a great pity if clinicians do not make the effort required to read them. BARRIE JAY

Genetics of Ocular Disease, Acute Retinal Necrosis Syndrome, Phthisis bulbi. Edited by W STRAUB. Pp. 164. SFr. 129. Karger: Basel. 1985.

This is the tenth volume in the series 'Developments in Ophthalmology' and contains three monographs on widely different topics. The late Jules François discusses the complex subject of multifactorial inheritance, and then considers its relevance to several groups of disorders, including glaucoma and strabismus. Certain of his conclusions must remain open to question, but they do indicate areas where further research is necessary.

Hayreh presents four cases of acute retinal necrosis and reviews 74 cases in the literature. In discussing the pathogenesis of the condition he concludes that, despite suggestions of a viral aetiology, this still remains unknown. The disease appears to represent an acute ocular panvasculitis, a term that Hayreh prefers to acute retinal necrosis.