BOOK REVIEWS


The Francis I Proctor Foundation, University of California, and its affiliate the Alta California Eye Research Foundation, have pioneered research and training in the important and increasingly recognised field of prevention of eye disease. This publication is a welcome addition to a slowly increasing library which attempts to include a wider world view. Thirty-one authors present contributions on many subjects, including bacterial, viral, fungal, and parasitic infections, opthalmia neonatorum, ocular injuries, contact lens-induced disease, uveitis, endophthalmitis due to drug abuse, iatrogenic drug-induced eye disease, and vaccines. Each chapter concludes with references and some of these give comprehensive lists for referral. Some contributions reflect more particularly the North American and developed world, and not the shared experience of improved ophthalmic practice and care, for example in prevention of ocular injuries and iatrogenic eye disease, has significant application worldwide. Other chapters, such as those on nutritional blindness and prevention of blindness, have special reference to the developing world.

It should be noted that for children aged 1 to 6 years with vitamin A deficiency the World Health Organisation recommends 200,000 IU of vitamin A orally on day 1 and day 2, with a further single dose four weeks later (half doses are given to children under 1 year old). Women of reproductive age, whether pregnant or not, with night blindness or Bitot's spot, should have only 10,000 IU daily for no more than two weeks. Ivermectin (Mectizan) is bringing fresh hope and impetus in the treatment of onchocerciasis. Trials are at present being conducted.

The text of this book is easily read, informative, and provides recent advances and views on a variety of topics, with the constraint of prevention of ocular disease as the main theme in presentation.

D D MURRAY McGAVIN

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Use of viscoelastic agents to aid visualisation during ocular surgery

Sir, The viscoelastic agents have been used primarily as tools facilitating surgical manipulation of tissues, tissue displacement, or as methods of filling intravascular volume. We wish to describe additional uses of these agents as optical devices to aid visualisation during surgery.

1. To prevent opacification of the corneal epithelium. A clear view through the cornea is essential for successful cataract and retinal surgery. It is not uncommon for the view to be obscured owing to changes in the corneal epithelium. Regular wetting with a physiological solution helps, but this may further damage the epithelium, requiring ever more frequent wetting. In addition this wetting has to be performed regularly by an assistant. Application of a thin layer of hydroxypropylmethylcellulose (HPMC) at the end of the operation makes the use of wetting solutions unnecessary and also protects the corneal epithelium from the changes associated with regular wetting. This application needs to be repeated only once or twice during the operation. Full strength sodium hyaluronate is not suitable for this purpose, as it is too elastic and does not spread out over the cornea.

2. To displace oil droplets from the cornea. After a vitrectomy with fluid/silicone oil exchange, oil droplets on the cornea may obscure the retinal view during indirect ophthalmoscopy. HPMC readily displaces these droplets of oil and improves visualisation.

3. To reduce the distortion caused by a gas/fluid interface behind a posterior capsule in a pseudophakic eye.

In addition to these uses, HPMC can also be used to evacuate substances from the anterior chamber and to reduce the distortion caused by folds in Descemet's membrane, particularly in an aphakic eye during fluid/gas exchange. 1

In summary we wish to draw attention to the value of viscoelastic substances as optical aids during ophthalmic surgery.

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NOTES


Kirby GR, Gregor ZJ. The removal of silicone oil from the anterior chamber in phakic eyes. Arch Ophthalmal 1987; 105: 1592.


In this imaginatively written book the author presents a number of case histories of hypothetical patients with common problems whose treatment is often controversial. He then invites a number of well known authorities to discuss these cases and to suggest the best line of management. Not surprisingly, the reader is directed to further reading. It is a short book which can be read through in a single sitting. 2

Perimetric Society

The IXth International Perimetric Society Meeting will be held in Malmö, Sweden, on 17-20 June 1990. Further information from: IXth Meeting Secretariat, Department of Ophthalmology, University of Lund, Malmö General Hospital, S-214 01 Malmö, Sweden.