A further challenge of 5-fluorouracil was not felt to be appropriate since the symptoms were very unpleasant, and we felt that they could be attributed to the presence of the drug in the tear film. A direct correlation has been shown between the amount of lacrimation and the concentration of fluorouracil in the tears. Side effects due to ocular surface toxicity are well documented and include blurred vision, excessive lacrimation, irritative conjunctivitis, keratitis, blepharitis, cicatricial ectropion, and punctal stenosis. 1,11 We thought it was of interest to record this new presentation which proved reversible upon discontinuing the 5-fluorouracil therapy.

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Fractured lens fibroptic cord

Editor,—The report by Bloom et al1 on lenticular burns following argon panretinal photocoagulation is interesting. This article highlights an unusual complication of posterior segment laser surgery. The source of the problem was the fibroptic cord. We would like to emphasise the importance of maintenance of fibroptic cords.

Our department now uses a double frequency YAG ‘crystal focus emerald’ laser (Biovision, Park Center, Walnut Creek, CA, USA) which produces monochromatic green light of 532 nm for posterior segment laser surgery. This solid state photocoagulator incorporates a helium neon system to allow visualisation of the aiming beam. Several authorised laser users complained that the aiming beam could not be seen as before and was only visualised after certain modifications were made including decreasing the overall illumination and using a red free filter; however, this led to poor resolution of retinal details. It was also noted that an increased power level was required to obtain the same retinal response. Peripheral photocoagulation became extremely difficult and treatment of all patients requiring macular laser treatment had to be postponed.

The maintenance unit of the laser were asked to inspect the system and it was found that the fibroptic cord was kinked and damaged at its entry to the microscope housing. Replacement of the cord and securing it in a better position led to resolution of the initial problem. Fortunately there were no documented complications, but some patients did have to be relisted for their laser treatment in an already busy department.

We would recommend in accordance with Bloom et al that, apart from routine maintenance of laser systems, the fibroptic cord must be protected at all times from even minimal injury.

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Letters to the editor. Obituary

It is likely that she may require right cataract extraction in the near future, which will allow detailed analysis to be performed on this unusual physical sign.

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Reply

Editor,—We would like to thank P I Murray for reporting another case of iris crystals. As in previous reports, this case showed that iris crystals are associated with chronic uveitis, could be unilateral, and may transiently disappear.1 However, this case has some unique features. To our knowledge, this is the only case of iris crystals that occurred in a patient with chronic panuveitis (the previously reported cases occurred in patients with chronic iridocyclitis). Furthermore, the elevation of serum Ig levels is also intriguing, since hypergammaglobulinemia has been documented in some of the cases of iris crystals.1 We believe that iris crystals occur more commonly than is reported. Further studies and case reports will be needed to elucidate the pathogenesis of iris crystals.

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OBITUARY

T. A. CASEY

Thomas Aquinas Casey, director of the corneoplastic unit at East Grinstead and consultant at Hillingdon Hospital, died on 25 February 1993, from a rapidly progressive lung cancer, at the age of 63.

After qualifying in Dublin, and nearly 10 years at Westminster Hospital as ophthalmic registrar, Tom was appointed to direct the corneoplastic unit on the sudden death of its founder, Sir Benjamin Rycroft. There he established an impressive postgraduate centre for teaching and research, including a three day international corneoplastic congress in 1977. At an early stage he had pioneered a technique for deep freezing corneas (which permitted the establishment of a bank of tissue typed donor material), and other innovations in corneal surgery, such as the use of recombinant epidermal growth factor. This innovative activity was accompanied by copious publications, of which the latest, a prize winning atlas of corneal dystrophies, came out only a year ago.