

anaesthesia. It could be argued that the low incidence of complications in the survey reflects inadequate monitoring but a serious complication would be hard to miss.

The survey suggested that most surgeons performing intraocular surgery under local anaesthesia did not have an anaesthetist present. Fifty per cent of surgeons did not secure intravenous access. Of the surgeons who reported that they had encountered life threatening situations only 56% routinely had intravenous access.

The opinion was divided on the need for an anaesthetist to be present. While 55% thought that an anaesthetist should be present, in practice only 68% of those who did, had cover available. Several surgeons pointed out that they were practising cataract surgery in a district general hospital where the eye theatre was part of a much larger theatre suite and anaesthetists and the crash team were always available. The situation may be different in a dedicated eye hospital.

I conclude that in the UK the incidence of life threatening complications of local anaesthesia in cataract surgery is probably lower than that reported by Hamilton *et al.*¹ It would seem that a comprehensive long term prospective survey of experience in the UK might be helpful in providing guidance on this subject.

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- 1 Hamilton RC, Gimbel HV, Strunin L. Regional anaesthesia for 12 000 cataract extraction and intraocular lens implantation procedures. *Canadian Journal of Anaesthesia* 1988; 615-23.

Life expectancy in keratoconus - correction to data used

EDITOR,—In 1992 we published a paper in the journal¹ on life expectancy in keratoconus. Since publication it has become apparent that the most appropriate analysis of the data was not used. Additionally, information became available for some patients who were originally classified as untraceable. Thus, it has been appropriate to reanalyse the augmented data.

Patient records from the keratoconus clinic at Moorfields Eye Hospital were used to identify 313 patients (193 male and 120 female), born before 1951, who were known to be alive in 1982. These patients were followed up during 1991 to identify the number of deaths within the sample; in order to investigate the hypothesis that underlying connective tissue disorder shortens the lives of patients with keratoconus. Actuarial techniques for constructing life tables were used to calculate the expected number of deaths within the sample (separated by sex) if the patients had experienced the mortality indicated in English Life Tables number 14 (ELT14). These tables are based on the mortality experience in England and Wales during 1980-2. As in the previous analysis for males, it was also possible to incorporate prior knowledge of the social class distribution of patients attending the clinic.²

For males, the expected number of deaths based on ELT14 was 7.6 and incorporating prior knowledge about social class reduced the expected number of deaths to 6.2. There were seven actual deaths recorded. For females, the expected number of deaths was 3.7 and five deaths were recorded. In each case the predicted number of deaths is very close to the number of deaths observed. Thus, the data do not suggest that patients with keratoconus

suffer higher mortality than the general population.

The results of our new analysis are entirely consistent with the conclusions drawn in the original paper.

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- 1 Moodaley LCM, Woodward EG, Liu CSC, Buckley RJ. Life expectancy in keratoconus. *Br J Ophthalmol* 1992; 76: 590-1.
2 Haberman S, Bloomfield DSF. Social class differences in mortality in Great Britain around 1981. *J Inst Actuaries* 1988; 115: 495-517.

ECCE for advanced cataracts in Africa

EDITOR,—Cataract surgery in developing countries has received increasing attention over the past few years with controversy over appropriate methods. We conducted a prospective audit to determine the success of routine extracapsular cataract extraction (ECCE) for age-related cataract in Malawi. All patients presenting to a central hospital with age-related uncomplicated cataract underwent ECCE by one surgeon. A total of 295 eyes of 295 patients (mean age 66) were analysed. Preoperative visual acuity was light perception in 224 (77%) eyes; 85 (28.8%) of the lenses were hypermature (Morgagnian or lenses with dense plaques on the anterior capsule).

The overall vitreous loss rate was 8.8% (95% confidence interval 5.6-12.0%). There was a significant association ($p=0.002$) between vitreous loss and maturity of the cataract. An improvement in preoperative visual acuity, from light perception to hand motion was associated with a decrease in vitreous loss from 11% to 1.5%. The risk of vitreous loss with hypermaturity was 10.2 times that of vitreous loss if preoperative vision was better than light perception. We believe this is related to changes in the capsule which do not occur until all the cortex is opacified (usually the case in light perception cataracts). Attempts to tear or puncture a tough capsule with a cystotome frequently lead to tears in the zonules.

Although not associated with vitreous loss, the posterior capsule needed removal in 15 (18%) eyes with hypermature cataracts because it was flapping in the visual axis or had unremovable central opacities.

These findings may have relevance to policy recommendations for appropriate surgical techniques in populations with very advanced cataracts. Although there are reports of success with routine ECCE with posterior chamber intraocular lenses in large populations in Asia,^{1,2} the patients had significantly fewer light perception and hypermature lenses than ours. Asian patients with cataract may also be younger than African, and age may contribute to zonule fragility. In addition, there are important socioeconomic, manpower, and infrastructure differences between Asia and Africa; what is possible in one area may be inappropriate in another.

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- 1 Ruit S, Robin AL, Pokhrel RP, Sharma A, DeFaller J. Extracapsular cataract extraction in Nepal: 2-year outcome. *Arch Ophthalmol* 1991; 109: 1761-3.
2 Naichiar G, Robin AL, Nalgiar AR, Krishnadas R. Posterior capsule tears during extracapsular cataract surgery in India. *Arch Ophthalmol* 1993; 111: 706-8.

Visual loss in AIDS patients

EDITOR,—In a recent case report, Ismail *et al* describe what they believe to be the second reported case of central retinal vein occlusion (CRVO) in a patient with AIDS and speculate as to whether or not the CRVO may precede significant AIDS related illness.¹ I would like to point out that we have previously published a case of CRVO in an HIV positive male without AIDS defining illness.² Extensive evaluation failed to reveal any other systemic abnormality which might be contributory.

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- 1 Ismail Y, Nemecek PM, Arsura EL. A rare cause of visual loss in AIDS patients: central retinal vein occlusion. *Br J Ophthalmol* 1993; 77: 600-1.
2 Roberts SP, Haefs TM. Central retinal vein occlusion in a middle-aged adult with HIV infection. *Optometry Vis Sci* 1992; 69: 567-9.

Reply

EDITOR,—We thank Sara Roberts for supporting our belief that there is an association between the occurrence of central retinal vein occlusion (CRVO) and AIDS and for her reference to the case report published by Roberts and Haefs.¹ There is one difficulty in that case that clouds the relation between AIDS and CRVO. In the patient presented by Roberts and Haefs, the patient's prothrombin as well as serum angiotensin converting enzyme level and lysozyme were all elevated, alluding to the possibility of other conditions such as liver disease or haematological malignancy which can be associated with a prothrombotic tendency.

In our case² as well as the case reported by Tiech *et al*,³ CRVO occurred in young AIDS patients without any evidence of additional diseases that might lead to a hypercoagulable state. This fact suggests a cause and effect relation between AIDS and CRVO.

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- 1 Roberts SP, Haefs TM. Central retinal vein occlusion in a middle-aged adult with HIV infection. *Optometry Vis Sci* 1992; 69: 567-9.
2 Ismail Y, Nemecek PM, Arsura EL. A rare cause of visual loss in AIDS patients: central retinal vein occlusion. *Br J Ophthalmol* 1993; 77: 600-1.
3 Tiech SA, Sonnabend J. Central retinal vein occlusion in a patient with AIDS. *Arch Ophthalmol* 1988; 106: 1508-9.

BOOK REVIEW

Basic Ophthalmology for Medical Students and Primary Care Residents. By Frank G Berson. Pp 168. £13.50. San Francisco: American Academy of Ophthalmology, 1993.

This American textbook is well laid out. Each of its nine chapters starts by defining its 'objectives' and the skills required to attain

them. The 'relevance' of such efforts is explained before proceeding to 'basic information', 'when and how to examine the eyes', 'how to interpret the findings', and 'management'. 'Points to remember' and two 'sample problems' precede updated references that end each chapter.

The logically thought out design and the clarity of the text make this book easy and pleasurable to read. There are many colour photographs showing normal and abnormal eye conditions and illustrations and tables which further enhance the text. In its 168 pages it achieves its aim of teaching important concepts, techniques, and facts of ophthalmology.

The only comments would be to point out that the Snellen chart in the UK is recorded at 6 rather than 10 metres and it would be useful to have a conversion table alongside the American visual acuity recordings. Another difference in the UK is the use of the Perkins rather than the Schiötz tonometer as an alternative to the Goldmann applanation tonometer when the latter cannot be used. Chapter 9 on 'Drugs and the eyes' could also include cyclosporin and Diamox (acetazolamide) as the latter drug, especially, is widely used in the UK.

In summary, this is an excellent basic ophthalmology textbook and one highly recommended to medical students and to all those whose work involves them coming into contact with eye disease.

ADRIANA AGIUS-FERNANDEZ

NOTICES

Glaucoma Society (UK & Eire)

DAVID COLE TRAVEL FELLOWSHIP

The David Cole Travel Fellowship, instituted by Merck Sharp and Dohme in memory of Professor David Cole, will assist a visit to a hospital or research centre during the academic year starting 1 October 1994. The award will be equivalent to £2000. The purpose of the award is to enable the successful applicant to gain experience and knowledge in pursuit of a specific project related to glaucoma.

MSc/Membership Course in Ophthalmology, University of Bristol at Bristol Eye Hospital

Applications are invited for a course in ophthalmology for the degree of MSc by advanced study in research over three academic terms. A short 6 month course is available in preparation for the membership of the Royal College of Ophthalmology. For details: Professor D L Easty, Department of Ophthalmology, Bristol Eye Hospital, Lower Maudlin Street, Bristol BS1 2LX, England.

Traumatic Optic Neuropathy - Clinical Trial

A clinical trial to study traumatic optic neuropathy is to take place randomising to megadose steroids alone v megadose steroids with extracranial optic nerve decompression. For details: Michael P Joseph, MD, Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary, 243 Charles St, Boston,

MA, 02114, USA. (Tel: 617-573-3192; Fax: 617-573-3914.)

Outcomes into Clinical Practice

A conference organised by the BMA, BMJ, and UK Clearing House on Health Economics will be held on 7 June 1994, at the International Hotel, Marsh Wall, Docklands, London. The meeting is particularly geared to clinical teams in both hospital and general practice. For further details: Pru Walters, BMA House, Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9JP. (Tel: 071-383 6518.)

Office of Continuing Education

The Office of Continuing Education is holding a conference entitled 'Principles and Practices of Data Management for Clinical Trials' on 16-17 June 1994 at the Thomas B Turner Building, Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions, Baltimore, Maryland, USA. Further details: Conference Coordinator, Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions, Office of Continuing Education, Turner Building, 720 Rutland Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21205, USA. (Tel: (410) 955-2959.)

International Conference on Biomedical Periodicals

The International Conference on Biomedical Periodicals will be held on 16-18 June 1994 in Beijing, China. Further details: Dr Yongmao Jiang, International Conference on Biomedical Periodicals, c/o Publishing House of Medical Journals, Chinese Medical Association, 42 Dongsi Xidajie, Beijing 100710, China. (Tel: 86-1-5133311 ext 362; Fax: 86-1-5123754.)

Xth Congress of the European Society of Ophthalmology

The Xth Congress of the European Society of Ophthalmology will take place on 25-29 June 1995 at the Milanofiori Convention Centre, Milan. Further details: Organising Secretariat: Moretti, Rossi & Associates, Largo Settimio Severo, 4, 20144 Milano, Italy. (Tel: 39-2-48021681; Fax: 39-2-48021977.)

XXVIIth International Congress of Ophthalmology

The International Council of Ophthalmology will hold its XXVIIth Congress in Toronto, Canada on 26-30 June 1994. Further details: Secretariat, 275 Bay Street, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1R 5Z5. (Tel: (613) 563-1994; Fax: (613) 236-2727.)

Allied Health Personnel - International Congress of Ophthalmology '94

The first Allied Health Personnel Conference will be held in conjunction with the XXVIIth International Congress of Ophthalmology on 26-30 June 1994 in Toronto, Canada. Further details: Congress Canada, 191 Niagara Street, Toronto, Canada M5V 1C9. (Tel: (416) 860-1772; Fax: (416) 860-0380.)

XIIIth Congress of the International Society of Geographical Ophthalmology

The XIIIth Congress of the International Society of Geographical Ophthalmology will be held on 1 and 2 July 1994 at the Queen Elizabeth Hotel, Montreal, Canada. Further details: Professor Gordon Johnson, Secretary, ISGO, International Centre for Eye Health, 11-43 Bath Street, London EC1V 9EL. (Tel: (71) 608 6907; Fax: (71) 250 3207.)

International Symposium on Optics, Imaging, and Instrumentation

An international symposium on optics, imaging, and instrumentation will be held on 24-29 July 1994 at the San Diego Convention Center and Marriott Hotel and Marina, San Diego, CA, USA. Further details: SPIE, PO Box 10, Bellingham, WA 98227-0010, USA. (Tel: 206/676-3290.)

Welsh Cataract Congress 1994

The Welsh Cataract Congress 1994 will be held on 8-10 September 1994. Details from: Eula Mae Childs, coordinator, Cullen Eye Institute, Baylor College of Medicine, 6501 Fannin, NC200, Houston, TX 77030, USA. (Tel: (713) 798-5941; Fax: (713) 798-4364.)

Frontiers in Penetrating Keratoplasty

The German Ophthalmological Society will hold an international symposium on 'Frontiers in penetrating keratoplasty' on 22-24 September 1994 in Heidelberg, Germany. Further details: Prof Dr R Sundmacher, University Eye Hospital, Moorenstrasse 5, 40225 Düsseldorf, Germany.

Screening for diabetic retinopathy in Europe: four years since the London protocols

Protocols to screen for and treat diabetic retinopathy were agreed upon on 9-10 October 1990 in London, as a step towards implementing the Saint Vincent Declaration and, in particular, its target of reducing new blindness due to diabetes by one third or more in the next five years. These protocols have been widely distributed with the help of the European Office of the World Health Organisation, the European Region of the International Diabetes Federation and the European Association for the Study of Diabetes. Time is about ripe to assess how much work has been done and to decide whether the protocols need to be updated or modified.

A new meeting is being organised for this purpose. It will be held on 25-26 September 1994 in Turin, Italy, as a satellite event to the 30th annual meeting of the EASD and will be organised jointly by the Working Group on Blindness of the WHO/IDF Saint Vincent Declaration Initiative and the Study Group on Eye Complications of the EASD (EASDEC). Further details: Massimo Porta, MD, PhD, Istituto di Medicina Interna, Università di Torino, Corso AM Dogliotti 14, I-10126 Torino, Italy. (Tel: +39 11 6635318; Fax: +39 11 6634751.)