Further Section

Ophthalmologica 1968;155:334-336

Varia

Ophthalmological Society of the United Kingdom
87th Annual Congress, held at the Royal College of Physicians, 11 St. Andrew’s Place, Regent’s

Over 350 members and guests were present, including many distinguished foreign visitors.
The Meeting opened with the Presidential Address entitled ‘Advancing Knowledge’. In this Sir
Tudor recalled the pattern of the rapid changes in our ophthalmic knowledge over the recent
decades and the factors that had influenced these. He spoke of the early forays into corneal
surgery, and his own pioneer work between the wars, with an engaging diversion on the
discovery of sight following corneal grafting in one of his patients who had been born totally
blind.

The first major discussion concerned ‘Microsurgery’. It was opened by Mr. M. J. Roper-Hall
who reviewed the development of microscopes in ophthalmic surgery and the various predictable
and unpredicted advantages these had brought. As a result, new operations had been introduced
which promised more specific and reliable relief of the glaucomatous eye, while further new
operations were to be anticipated. Prof. Richard Troutman described the production of binocular
dissecting microscopes, which were adapted to the specific requirements of the eye surgeon, and
he elaborated the several features which he felt to be particularly desirable, along with specific
attachments to allow the teaching of ophthalmic microsurgery; and he forecasted further
developments. Mr. Dermot Pier.se discussed also the disadvantages in the curtailed visual field
and reduced mobility, and the changes in instrumentation and technique that this entailed,
involving even major changes in design and in operative procedures.

Professor G. Mackensen considered the suture material and suturing techniques that the use of
the operating microscope enjoined, high tensile strength and elasticity as well as physical
constancy rendering synthetic fibres especially favourable. He demonstrated the techniques
which were now preferred in the Tübingen University Eye Clinic.

The other symposium was dedicated to ‘Electrodiagnosis’, in which no fewer than six openers
gave short papers which ranged over the theoretical and practical applications of the subject. Mr.
J. H. Kelsey outlined the theoretical basis of the ERG and the EOG with particular reference to
the sources of the potential changes which are measured during the tests, and it was much easier
after this to follow the reasoning behind the possible applications and limitations of these tests.
Mr. Kelsey went on to detail some of the clinical uses to which the tests had been put. Dr. G. B.
Arden then described the work which he had been doing to try to overcome some of the present
limitations of these electrodiagnostic tests, and particularly his work on the ERG recorded from
the fovea alone. He explained how the difficulty of interference from background noise had
largely been overcome by the use of computer averages so that foveal electroretinography is now
practicable. Mr. J. L. K. Bankes considered further this technique of obtaining a foveal
electroretinogram and demonstrated some ‘F.E.R.’ recordings in various macular lesions. Mr. R.
K. Blach

Varia
and Miss Joan Behrman discussed the factors influencing the electrical activity of the eye in retinal detachment and attempted to correlate these factors, so as to assess the health of the retina independently of the detachment.

Dr. D. Adlakha, Mr. S. J. Crews, Dr. Shearer and Miss Tonks reviewed some applications of electrodiagnostic procedures which might help to identify toxic reactions of drugs on the eye, particularly in chloroquine and phenothiazine retinopathy. Finally Prof. G. M. Bremen gave an enthralling account of the technique of electromyography of the extraocular muscles, and explained how these studies can be applied clinically in the differential diagnosis of myopathies, myasthenia gravis and in the pseudopalsies resulting from an orbital blow-out fracture or a tendon sheath syndrome. From what Prof. Breinen said it seemed certain that separate components had been identified in the extraocular muscles on a histological, physiological and pharmacological basis, and that these are thought to represent functionally a fast and a slow component. The ability to control the components independently, we were told, might herald a revolution in the management of concomitant strabismus.

Short papers were presented by Mr. Montague Ruben, who described the changes in corneal tissues resulting from contact lens wear and discussed their aetiology. Mr. A. G. Leigh gave a brief review of the indications for therapeutic keratoplasty and discussed in particular the problems of herpes simplex of the cornea, with the indications for operation, and the operative techniques employed in advanced cases. Mr. A. Patterson and Prof. Barrie Jones also considered ocular herpes simplex, and evidenced the value of IDU in conjunction with steroids in its treatment. Mr. C. G. Keith discussed the common problem of blepharo-conjunctivitis, his attempts to establish reliable diagnostic criteria and the value of respective methods of treatment in a series of cases at Moor-fields. He stressed the importance of expression of the Meibomian glands; and concluded that eye ointments tended to aggravate the greasiness, while dandruff played little part in its causation or persistence.

Mr. J. D. Asrams illustrated the technique of fundus transillumination using the light coagulator. Under conditions of dark adaptation the fundus view obtained usually made it possible to distinguish characteristic features in the different types of lesion which might be found around the posterior pole of the globe. When this technique had been further developed it was likely to prove a useful aid in differential diagnosis. Mr. Ian Duguid described the physical signs found in anterior segment necrosis following retinal detachment surgery. He emphasised the role of long posterior ciliary artery occlusion in the causation of the disorder and therefore the need for care in the region of these structures particularly when using diathermy or in encircling procedures. The cryoprobe he thought was less dangerous in this regard. This complication seemed to occur chiefly in young patients but its occurrence was quite consistent with a good visual prognosis provided that the retina had been successfully replaced. The frequent difficulty in the differential diagnosis of the condition from postoperative infection usually made it necessary to manage the cases on systemic antibiotics, and there would also appear to be a place for Rheuma-crodex administration intravenously. Mr. G. V. Catford gave a resume of all the cases of ambliopia treated by occlusion at one branch of Moorfields during the last two years, and evaluated the results of his findings. Mr. P. V. Rgercroft gave

Varia

his analysis of a large number of cases of ptosis and discussed the difficult problem of the choice of operation. Mr. B. S. Kuming illustrated the evolution of keratomalacia and demonstrated the
eye-signs of protein malnutrition. Mr. R. K. Blach and Mr. E. W. G. Davies discussed the particular problems in treating extensive retinal dialysis and described the solutions they had evolved. Dr. J. Mellerio summarised the nature of laser beams with histological evidence of their traumatic effect, and discussed the possibility of using these shock waves to measure in vivo the elastic constants of the eye.

Mr. K. Rubinstein illustrated the use of fluorescein retinography in the diagnosis of retinal arterial occlusion and illustrated various unexpected phenomena in the clinical patterns that he had found. Dr. M. Merz showed a film entitled ‘An atypical case of ophthalmic opsoclonia’.

The 1967 Bowman Lecture was delivered by Prof. Michael J. Hogan. He introduced his paper, entitled Bruch’s Membrane and Macular Degeneration, with a reminder that the scientific material which he was about to present would probably have had a particular attraction for our founder since it bore a considerable resemblance to the studies in microscopy which typified so much of Sir William’s work, on this occasion, however, with the considerable advantages conferred by the use of the ultramicroscope. We were shown, in a beautiful series of histological preparations and diagrams, how the latter instrument has greatly increased understanding of the minute structure of Bruch’s membrane and of the changes in its form which accompanies advancing age and which were to be found in degenerative diseases. In reporting the results of a study of 28 eyes with senile macular pigmentary degeneration Prof. Hogan found consistent and clear-cut changes in the minute structure of Bruch’s membrane characterised chiefly by collagen degeneration, the deposition of a cuticular material and the disintegration of the retinal pigment epithelium; the subjacent choriocapillaris remaining quite normal. In a further study of degenerative changes in Bruch’s membrane found in association with systemic disorders, such as pseudoxanthoma elasticum, Paget’s disease and others, changes in minute structure of an exactly similar nature were found in the presence of a normal capillary layer.

Whereas in vascular diseases which involve the retinal circulation, macular damage leading to such lesions as holes or cysts was not found to be associated with any disturbance of the pigment epithelium. These findings were taken to indicate clearly that the primary lesion in senile macular pigmentary degeneration was to be found in Bruch’s membrane and not in the subjacent capillaries. This important and beautifully presented lecture served particularly to emphasise the contribution which a study of the ultrastructure of basement membranes has already yielded, and could be expected to yield in the future.

The scientific part of the programme was adjourned on Thursday morning while members joined in a special Service at Westminster Abbey dedicated to Ophthalmology. The Service was conducted by the Venerable E. F. Carpenter, Archdeacon of Westminster who also preached the sermon. The lessons were read by Professor Derrick Vail, Past President of the International Council of Ophthalmology and by the Society’s President Sir Tudor Thomas. Those who were privileged to participate in this unique service are likely always to remember it for its moving beauty and dignity.