

Assessing Children's Vision: A Handbook

Susan J. Leat, Rosalyn H. Shute and Carol A. Westall
Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford, 1999,
£35.00, ISBN 0 7506 0584 7

The authors' wide clinical experience in assessing young children is evident throughout this new handbook. The anticipated core readership is optometry students and experienced optometrists who are new to working with young children. It starts from basics; previous knowledge is therefore not required, making it particularly useful for both optometry and orthoptic students in the early stages of their training. Explanations are given using non-medical terminology to make it understandable to non-professionals such as parents of children with low vision and special needs teachers.

The book begins with a chapter giving general background information on child development and visual development. In Chapter 2, consideration is given to specific risk factors that may lead to abnormal visual development and the importance of early visual assessment. Chapter 3, 'Opening the Consultation', stresses the need for good communication with both parents and children to ensure effective history taking and to promote a positive atmosphere from the early stages to achieve best results. A wealth of practical information and advice on how to accomplish this is provided. Chapters 7 to 13 consider specific aspects of visual function: visual acuity, contrast sensitivity, binocular vision, visual fields, colour vision, eye movements and electrophysiological testing. The development of each of these visual functions is well described with extensive reference to research findings. Detailed descriptions of assessment techniques are given with emphasis, once more, on practical tips to gain reliable and accurate results in young

children. The final chapter deals with the construction of management plans, giving guidelines on when to prescribe refractive corrections, managing strabismus, reading difficulties, accommodation anomalies and low vision. Ethical issues such as consent to treatment and patient confidentiality are also discussed.

The guidelines for treatments, particularly regarding ocular deviation, are brief, generalised and lack specific detail. Some of the advice is questionable; for example, whilst the authors acknowledge that close monitoring of visual acuity is required during treatment for amblyopia, they actually recommend follow-up visits every 3 months for children under 3 years of age and 6 monthly for older children. Most clinicians would consider this to be inadequate in the majority of cases. Having advocated the use of occlusion, in some instances into the teenage years, it is probably remiss to fail to mention the necessity to measure the density of suppression and the risk of intractable diplopia if care is not taken.

Illustrations to the text are black and white sketches that the authors intend to be both informative and serve to humanise the material. Whilst the latter is achieved they do not always represent best possible clinical practice – for example preferential looking card presented at waist level without the use of a screen.

This book should certainly be considered by all who are new to visual assessment of young children, as its practical emphasis and evidence-based approach is an excellent combination.

Helen Griffiths
Royal Hallamshire Hospital
Sheffield, UK

Ophthalmic Ultrasound: A Diagnostic Atlas

Cathy Dibernardo, Andrew Schachat and Sharon Fekrat
Thieme, Stuttgart, 1998, 143pp., £59,
ISBN 0-86577-765-9

This text from staff of the Wilmer Ophthalmological Institute is designed to be used as a 'thorough reference by both experienced and inexperienced echographers'. It is based on the technique of standardised echography using both A- and B-scans. A 10 page introductory chapter summarises briefly but with the help of clear photographs the technique for performing ophthalmic ultrasonography. There are then nine chapters covering examination of the anterior segment, vitreous, retina, choroid, trauma, intraocular tumours, optic nerve, extraocular muscles and miscellaneous ocular conditions. For each chapter there is a 1 page introduction highlighting the pathology which can be detected with ultrasound. This is followed by a large number of scans which are typical of the various conditions and each of which is accompanied by a short explanatory text. Although there is a chapter on examination of the optic nerve and another on the extraocular muscles there is none on the orbit itself even though ultrasound has a well-established role in detecting and differentiating orbital lesions such as cavernous haemangioma, pseudotumour and enlarged orbital veins.

This atlas might be a useful addition to the small library which could be kept next to the ultrasound equipment, but Hatem Atta's *Ophthalmic Ultrasound* is likely to remain the first choice as an introductory text whilst Byrne and Green's *Ultrasound of the Eye and Orbit* is still the best comprehensive text book and reference for ophthalmic ultrasound.

R.C. Bosanquet
Newcastle upon Tyne