

Book Reviews

Topics in Ophthalmology by J. Kanski. Tape no 18 (Neuro-ophthalmology). Balliere Tindall/Saunders

This is the eighteenth of a series of 20 taped accounts, which, like chapters in a text-book, cover respective aspects of eye-disease. The information is clear and concise, the material well chosen, and the supporting set of 50 slides are excellent.

Most students find lectures helpful as a complement to their bookwork, serving to consolidate the mass of information they must absorb; and such tapes are often used for revision. But they start with some formidable disadvantages, quite apart from one's need to be isolated in a darkened room equipped with a slide projector etc. For, as the disembodied voice marches remorselessly on, the listener often longs to slow it down over sticky passages, or just for a pause to let him get his breath and bearings, or else to be able to hark back or to skip a bit, as he would when reading; but, with a cassette, achieving this can be a clumsy distraction. The essence of a good lecturer is audience-awareness, so that he can ring the changes in tempo and style, when it is needed to sustain interest. Here there is none.

To combat this, the presenter of such a tape must make every effort to avoid reading through solid paragraphs of prose, however acceptable these would be in a written article. For our attention slips when we meet words that are stodgy (like 'parameter' and 'modality') or intrusive (like 'however'), or else heavy bridging passages (as 'we shall now discuss'); and we feel distanced by an unremitting passive voice and indirect speech. For this is not how we talk naturally. Nor can one really keep pace with the wayward journeyings of, say, the preganglionic and pretectal fibres, up and around the brain stem, Edinger Westphal and all, when compressed into one turgid polysyllabic sentence.

I feel this is Mr. Kanski's only failing. If, in

the next of his admirable series, he would aim to beguile us—to lighten the script, to vary its emphasis, and really seek to communicate—even to the exclusion of some of all those useful facts. His tapes would become a model for all.

P D Trevor-Roper

Glaucoma Surgery by Maurice H. Luntz, Raymond Harrison, Howard I. Schenker. Williams and Wilkens, Baltimore/London

The management of glaucoma varies considerably in different parts of the world (and indeed in different parts of the same nation) but intervention at an early stage in the treatment of almost all forms of the disease has become more acceptable with the advent of laser therapy. The added advantage of permanent control of intraocular pressure throughout the 24 hours achieved by surgery has also become more appreciated so that the production of this text is extremely timely.

This text sets out to be a manual of techniques of glaucoma surgery and is very successful in this. The photographs, mostly in colour, are clear and easily understood and the diagrams are well drawn, large and informative. Sensibly the operations which have been described in detail are those which have been proved successful in the authors' hands. The alternatives are described in less detail or in some cases not at all (eg goniotomy). It is legitimate in this type of text to dodge the issue of just when to do a particular procedure but sometimes it would have been helpful.

This is an excellent atlas of glaucoma surgery. It is unambiguous, easy to follow both from description and diagrams and will be of considerable help for ophthalmologists who are able to make their own decisions as to when to operate.

Peter Watson