

EDITORIAL

Cambridge Symposium on the Eyelids

Ophthalmologists tend to take the eyelids for granted, regarding them as just something which prevents them from viewing the whole eye. As with so many tissues, it is only when they do not function properly that we become aware of their existence and of all the problems that can arise from their malfunction.

Over the past few years a whole sub-specialty has grown up, consisting of ophthalmologists who have an interest in plastic surgery or plastic surgeons who have an interest in the eye or orbital disease. The underlying patho-physiology of the disorders which affect the eyelid has, however, received scant attention and although it is not a glamorous topic, it is vital to understand the underlying mechanisms of inflammation and repair or attempted repair before it is possible to plan accurately a course of action for any particular patient and to know what complications to expect and how to deal with them.

The eyelids which are skin, (and an unusual form at that), on the outside and mucous membrane on the inside, form a junction zone which is always of pathological interest and significance. They not only provide protection for the eye but they ensure that the tears are always in contact with the cornea, keeping the surface moist and transparent, in addition to providing much of the sensation which makes this possible.

In this issue we tried to redress part of the balance between the science and the art in lid disease by concentrating on the underlying mechanisms which are involved in inflammation, and the development of scar tissue. We hope that by taking this information to the laboratory we can find effective methods of inhibiting scar formation and counteracting its overproduction. To understand the congenital abnormalities which so often cause problems in lids on the underlying eye we have discussed development and the anatomical relationship to the underlying structures and on the clinical side, we concentrated on the more unusual aspects of lid disease and the newest methods of dealing with them. We hope all this will lead to a clearer understanding of the structure, function and pathology of the eyelids than there has been in the past.

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