

Electrophysiologic Testing in Disorders of the Retina, Optic Nerve and Visual Pathway, 2nd edition

Gerald Allen Fishman, David G. Birch, Graham E. Holder and Mitchell G. Bridgell.

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Now with an extra 144 pages, this monograph is intended to serve as both an introduction and a reference work for those interested in the fundamentals of electrophysiology and its application in retinal, optic nerve and visual pathway disorders.

The first and largest chapter (just over half of the book) is devoted to the Ganzfeld electroretinogram (ERG), and delves somewhat deeper into the subject than the International Society for Clinical Electrophysiology of Vision (ISCEV) standard protocol, looking at scotopic/photopic threshold and 'off' responses for example. Useful comparisons are drawn between various eye electrode types, and now include the Hawlina-Konec (HK loop) electrode, although there is still no reference to the excellent Henkes 'Lo-Vac' lenses.

Coverage of the PERG has been greatly expanded from previously just two pages to a full chapter. The stringent recording techniques and amplifier characteristics required for this technically demanding procedure are discussed in some detail, with useful comparisons being drawn between different electrode types. However, in pointing out that the gold-foil electrode is probably more stable than the Dawson-Trick-Litzkow (DTL) electrode due to the reduction in amplitude that can result from a DTL electrode slipping into the lower conjunctival fornix, the author omits to mention that stability can be significantly improved by placing the DTL electrode in the fornix in the first place.

New to this edition is a chapter on the developing field of multi-focal electroretinography which outlines the promise of this sophisticated technique as a sensitive indicator of retinal disease. This chapter also contains an expanded and informative section on focal electroretinography.

The chapter on electro-oculography (EOG) appears largely unchanged, detailing basic recording methods and calculation of the Arden Index.

Visual evoked potentials (VECPs) are covered in a relatively small chapter that has been extensively re-authored and updated. Again delving deeper than the ISCEV protocol, this looks at paediatric testing and the effect of age on the

responses, and briefly discusses motion, sweep, binocular beat and multi-focal techniques. A useful flowchart detailing clinical applications for visual electrophysiological tests sits somewhat out of place early in this chapter, and would perhaps have been better located in an appendix due to its generality.

Despite the inevitable limitations of a book that fits in a lab-coat pocket, this is a repository of wisdom and provides a background on the physiological principles that underpin the measurement of various electrophysiological components. Copious examples are given of findings that would be anticipated in disorders of the retina, optic nerve and visual pathway, plus the clinical phenotypes of conditions for which electrophysiological investigations are of potential value. These show how enlightened use of procedures can be of value in the diagnosis and monitoring of patients with acquired or hereditary disorders. The long list of references following each chapter is more comprehensive than in the previous edition, and will be much appreciated by readers wishing to pursue greater understanding. However, the technical detail concentrates on parameters that have physiological significance and the reader is referred to the ISCEV standards for information such as filter settings, which would have taken up little extra space and given greater completeness. Surprisingly, no mention is made of electrode cleaning and sterilisation, and the book is let down by shaky hand-drawn waveforms, some of which display temporal distortion with time actually going backwards!

The style is very readable, and the book will make an excellent reference for the clinician, and for those daunted by the prospect of wading through the standard tomes. It will also be welcomed by new 'practitioners' of visual electrodiagnostics, including scientists and technologists, who wish to have a concise overview of the subject.

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Ophthalmology: Clinical Drawings for Your Patients

Peter Simcock.
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From first impressions the book can only be described as 'a vision of pink', since not only are the pages edged in pink but

some of the illustrations are pink, as is the front cover. I am sure this does not reflect the author's taste, but could have some bearing if visually impaired patients are to read the information for themselves. The author's aim was to help health care professionals explain to their patients in simple terms, conditions and treatments of the eye by the use of text and illustrations. I am sure it would be of only limited value to general practitioners or optometrists, since the practices in many ophthalmic units will differ from those described in the book.

Some of the illustrations are not only confusing (cataract portrayed as red) but could be frightening to elderly patients (in particular the patient in theatre illustration). The author must take into account that patients do take both written and pictorial information literally, so such sentences as 'Your chin will be put on a moulded chin rest and your forehead pressed against a band' may give the impression that force may be used, when clearly we all know that this would not be the case. Other confusing explanations to the patient include the instructions for the instillation of eye ointment, which reads 'Squeeze out a strand of ointment the length of the iris'. Many elderly patients have trouble getting the top off the ointment, let alone having to remember the exact length of ointment required.

Although I am sceptical that the book will be of benefit to patients, it possibly does have a place for health care professionals who need to understand both the anatomy and the possible treatments available to patients. Most eye departments produce information which is both clearer and comprehensive and gives the patient a clear idea of what will happen to them whilst undertaking treatment in the department. It may be of benefit to both the health care professional intending to give out information, and to the patient, if a copy of any intended procedures be obtained from the local eye unit. This will ensure that accurate and relevant information is passed on to the patient. Often incorrect information can be interpreted by the patient as an incompetent health care professional. To sum up this review, I don't think I will be making space for this book on my shelf.

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