

RETINAL DETACHMENT - THE ESSENTIALS OF MANAGEMENT

by H B Chawla

PG Publishing : Singapore, 1990

Retinal detachment is not a rare ocular disorder, though certainly not seen in the frequency of cataracts. Because of its relatively lower incidence in the general population, the opportunity to perform surgery where indicated, is much reduced in the course of an ophthalmologist's daily practice. And, because we see less of it, we tend to know less - in practical terms, that is. "Retinal Detachment - The Essentials of Management" is a book that aims to provide the fundamentals on the subject of retinal detachment management - be it surgical or otherwise.

The author of this book is Dr Hector Bryson Chawla, by whom local residents in ophthalmology have had the opportunity to be tutored during his previous visits to Singapore. He took up a Retinal Fellowship in Chicago in 1968 and started the Retina Service in the Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh, UK. He is now consultant in charge of the Retina Service in Edinburgh.

Dr Chawla writes in an inimitable style that is more of the descriptive than the narrative and the picture he paints of what he thinks is clear in the words that he uses. That he is an avid golfer is evident as one turns the pages of this book. The analogies he draws from his golf game does brighten up the text, though of course, the reader would have to know a bit of golf to appreciate these.

The text is divided into nine chapters, the first two dealing with examination techniques. Dr Chawla has placed much emphasis on this aspect as indeed, if one does not start out right in the examination of a patient, one will not come out right in the diagnosis and henceforth, any further management necessarily cannot be in order. Binocular indirect ophthalmoscopy and the orientation of the inverted fundal image via the condensing lens should pose no further problems to any ophthalmologist after digesting the first chapter. An elegant description of the art of scleral depression follows in the next chapter.

As with all medical disorders, the key to management lies in

the understanding of pathology and Dr Chawla has quite rightly added a section on the pathology of retinal detachment. Various types of detachment are described - congenital, degenerative and traumatic. Once the pathology is grasped, the symptoms that a patient presents with can be easily explained and the author goes on to do so with abundant clarity - the why, where and when of retinal detachment in Chapter 4. It is only after a solid grounding in all these fundamentals in the first third of the book can one then go on to the aspect of management.

Although the title may suggest that only the essentials of management will be touched on, Dr Chawla has actually gone into considerable depth on the subject. Scleral marking, cryopexy, encirclage, explants, suturing technique, intravitreal air injection, subretinal fluid release, paracentesis and finally, closure and post-operative care are all covered in lucid detail. He then goes on to describe various situations such as myopia, aphakia, rigid retinae, dialysis, disinsertion, macular hole and giant tear, each requiring certain considerations on the part of the surgeon in, as Dr Chawla likes to put it, letting "the eye decide which combination of techniques will make enough space within to flatten the retina at a first attempt without closing off the central retinal artery."

The author has developed a chapter each on complications and, on prophylaxis - conditions which do and do not need it. The book ends with a discussion on the place of vitrectomy in the management of retinal detachment.

All said, I find this book well thought out and well written. There are ample illustrations to complement the text and a list of references for further reading comes at the end of each chapter. It is highly recommended to all post-graduate students in ophthalmology and as an introduction to retinal detachment management for all aspiring retinal surgeons.

Dr Jon Goh
Tan Tock Seng Hospital

Singapore Medical Association 22nd National Medical Convention

Saturday 13 April & Sunday 14 April 1991
Mandarin Ballroom, The Mandarin Singapore

13 April Medical Symposium on Recent Advances in Medicine and Medical Technology

14 April Public Forum on High Technology Medicine - from Dilemma to Choice

Seminars: I Medical Litigation
II Adverse Drug Reaction & Medik Awas

For more details, contact : The SMA Secretariat (Tel: 2231264)