

BOOK REVIEW

CLINICAL OPHTHALMOLOGY: AN ASIAN PERSPECTIVE

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Clinical Ophthalmology: An Asian Perspective is a major textbook of clinical ophthalmology. It covers most of the eye diseases seen in the clinical practice of ophthalmology, concentrating mostly in clinical presentation and management. It is principally written by the faculty and staff of the Singapore National Eye Centre. It is indeed admirable that with only 15 years of history, the Singapore National Eye Centre has developed from a small department to a major eye centre, with 50 ophthalmologists covering most subspecialties in the field, and would commit their resources to write a major textbook on clinical ophthalmology, albeit with support from outside expertise, such as Jack Rootman of Vancouver, British Columbia, Paul Foster of Moorefield Eye Hospital, JF Cullens, and others.

The book is very thoughtfully organised into ten sections. In each section, the coverage of the clinical aspects of the various eye diseases are very comprehensive. The most notable section is *Ocular Inflammation and Immunology*, in which 15 chapters cover a variety of immunological disorders in the eye. The good organisation of the book makes it easy to read. The book is also well-illustrated. It has distinct titles in each chapter with a short conclusion to capture its major points. As such, this book will be a good textbook for ophthalmologists-in-training as well as practising ophthalmologists.

As the title of the book implies, this book covers mostly eye care and clinical practice in Asia. It is interesting that the last chapter of the book includes quality assurance programmes conducted at the Singapore National Eye Centre, summarising the Art and Science of patient care in this institution. A more detailed coverage in this area is encouraged. Although the title of this book refers to an "Asian perspective", yet most of the material covered applies to the practice of ophthalmology worldwide. Only some coverage is specifically targeted towards an Asian perspective, such as acute and primary angle closure glaucoma, etc. However, there are large rural populations in most of the Asian countries, and infectious eye diseases are still an important topic, and are largely neglected in this textbook. I suspect that in the urban environment of Singapore, infectious diseases of the eye are probably not a dominant part of the clinical experience of the authors. As such, the omission is a disappointment to the Asian readers.

The book focuses on clinical manifestations and management. There is very little basic science, pathogenetic mechanisms, and molecular biological approaches to diseases. I understand that the Singapore National Eye Centre does have a strong research group, but the contributions of the researchers to clinical ophthalmology are not integrated in the book. Furthermore, the book is copyrighted in 2005. Many of the most recent new therapeutic approaches are missing. For example, the use of Macugen, Lucentis, and Avastin in the treatment of age-related macular degeneration are not discussed. The new upcoming therapeutic approaches to diabetic retinopathy with Arxxant, Avastin, Bevasiranib, and Sandostatin, are also not included. In recent months, refractive surgery focuses on treatment of presbyopia with the newer Lasik machines, and this area is also not covered. New eye care approaches are so quickly developed in recent years that text books of this size are frequently out of date before they reach the community!

The description of the clinical practice of ophthalmology was summarised by Duke Elder in his System of Ophthalmology of 15 volumes, some 50 years ago. Subsequently, others such as Thomas Duane, Daniel M Alvert and Frederick A Jackobiec, have published textbooks of four to five volumes to update the clinical practice of ophthalmology. In recent years, however, the development of medical knowledge is so fast that most clinical subspecialties publish their books in smaller volumes, limited to a subspecialty practice. To have one book to cover the clinical practice of ophthalmology is a very difficult assignment because the coverage of material is so voluminous. The authors and five editors of this book, *Clinical Ophthalmology: An Asian Perspective*, have engaged in a superb organising technique using their diverse talents, and have indeed done a good job in summarising the clinical aspects in the practice of ophthalmology. As such, I do recommend this book as a brilliant attempt to cover modern eye care in a single volume of less than 800 pages.

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