described and the technique of opening the sella turcica, as first described by Jain, and frequently used by the reviewer is also mentioned.

The short accounts of the laser in paediatric surgery and the photodynamic therapy of brain tumours is followed by a most useful description of the excision of thalamic arteriovenous malformations using the Nd:YAG laser at 10 to 20 watts focused to a spot size of 2 mm, which penetrates quite large blood vessels and causes contraction and coagulation. There are good illustrations of the type of AVM treated.

The chapter entitled "The laser and stereotactic neurosurgery" by Patrick J Kelly is a masterly account by the pioneer of this technique which uses the BRW frame and enables CO2 laser resection of gliomas under CT control with particular emphasis upon resection of the full extent of the tumour as demonstrated by CT enhancement, but not into the MRI penumbra of brain parenchyma known to be infiltrated by tumour cells. The histology of 191 tumours thus removed, is listed.

The book then outlines experimental results of laser assisted vascular and anastomosis (LAVA and LANA respectively), and this is followed by the description of the contact laser in which the Nd:YAG is applied particularly to blood vessels using a sapphire contact tip which enables power density to be controlled independently of spot size and focus. This technique can also be used for neural incisions e.g. DREZ lesions.

The notable omissions from this useful book are the use of the CO2 laser for the micro surgical excision of low grade gliomas of the third ventricle and spinal cord.

G BROCKLEHURST

**Book reviews**


The author of this book has spent his life investigating the retina. Initially a biochemist with Wald at Harvard, he then progressed to investigate the anatomy and physiology of the retina. Finally as a Professor of Biology he has devoted recent years to the pharmacology of the retina with particular interest in the neurotransmitters.

This book therefore commences with a review of the retina as an approachable part of the brain. This is followed by a review of the cellular structure and synaptic organisation of the retina. The major part of this book is on the neuronal responses and synaptic mechanisms. The retina is particularly well situated for the study of intracellular recording and thus provides a strong spring board from which to launch our understanding of neuronal function in the brain. The study of neurotransmitters has also shown how complicated they have become, and there are at least 15 neurotransmitters or neuromodulators detected so far in the retina.

The final chapters relate to electrical activity in the retina, photo receptor mechanisms and a final chapter relates the relevance of work on the retina to our understanding of brain mechanisms.

This book is well written, readable and in 250 pages provides an expert's review of the exciting times the researcher in visual work has had over the past three decades. The future appears equally exciting.

MD SANDERS
Polyneuropathies Associated with Plasma cell Dyscrasias

PK Thomas

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