

Book Review

Textbook of Ocular Pharmacology

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This large and comprehensive text on ocular pharmacology provides the reader with an excellent review of the subject, beginning with basic pharmacological principles and extending through to the clinical applications of present-day drugs. Added to this are historical perspectives and insights into future potential drug applications.

The book is divided into eight sections, the principle ones being, General Ocular Pharmacology, Glaucoma, Retina and, Cornea and External Diseases. The remaining sections cover Uveitis, Anaesthesia, Paediatrics and Diagnostic Drugs.

The chapters on glaucoma comprehensively review glaucoma pharmacology, including surgical antifibrosis agents. Newer medications such as brimonidine and latanoprost are well covered and there are interesting sections on neuroprotective agents and medical trabeculocanulotomy. The effect of glaucoma and its treatment on ocular blood flow is, however, somewhat disjointed, and a separate section might have been helpful. There is an American bias in that some areas of concern for UK Ophthalmologists are barely covered (e.g. conjunctival inflammatory cell populations after topical adrenergic therapy), and also some medications discussed are not available in the UK, such as, phospholine iodide and thymoxamine.

The section on cornea and external diseases gives a chapter-by-chapter review of the antimicrobial agents divided into sections on antibiotics, antivirals and antifungal agents. There are useful chapters reviewing intraocular irrigating solutions, surgical visco-elastic substances and tissue adhesives. There is also a chapter dedicated to the mitomycin treatment of cornea disease. All of these chapters are up to date and very well referenced. A small criticism is that for the non-specialist reader although the characteristics of each of the agents

are discussed, there is little didactic advice on the selection of particular agents for specific clinical circumstances.

The section on retina begins with a review of available antibiotics and the place of intracameral injections. A chapter on antivirals follows and it is somewhat surprising the greater emphasis is not given to the increasing popularity of intravitreal gancyclovir to treat AIDS-associated DMV retinitis. The chapter on proliferative vitreoretinopathy is a thorough review of the numerous agents that have been used to avoid or treat this severe complication of retinal detachment, but sadly there is little direct clinical application. A chapter on drugs affecting the coagulation–fibrinolysis pathways is particularly welcome for Clinical Ophthalmologists, and similarly the chapter on angiogenesis and growth factors, which also has a succinct summary of our present understanding at the end of the chapter.

The section on Paediatric Prescribing begins with an overview, which highlights uncertainties over the degree of systemic absorption of topically-applied drops, and chapters dealing with all the commonly used drugs then follow. However, antibiotics are not specifically dealt with, and the chapter on antiglaucoma medications doesn't include any of the newer preparations, which are thoroughly discussed elsewhere. Recommendations with regard to the use of phenylephrine in neonates differ from those issued by the Royal College of Ophthalmologists in the UK with regard to retinopathy of prematurity screening (1.0 vs 2.5%).

This is an extremely useful reference book which should be available in ophthalmic libraries, particularly since careful reading of any of its chapters highlights the extent to which most clinicians have a very limited knowledge of the pharmacology, even of the agents which they use almost on a daily basis. Research Scientists involved in ophthalmic work will also find the book extremely helpful since clinical ophthalmology is also extensively covered.

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