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BOOK REVIEW

Good News From Switzerland: A History of Retinal Reattachment Surgery Authors: Peter Leaver, Richard Keeler 2013 ISBN: 978-1-85315-993-0 RSM Press

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The visionary title of the book "Good News from Switzerland" was obtained from an earlier statement by Frank Juler in his article in the British Journal of Ophthalmology; in1930, he realized the importance of Jules Gonin's invention. Today, we agree that Gonin's concept revolutionized retinal detachment from an untreatable disease to a standardized approach with a high success rate.

The book presents an excellent historic review on treatment approaches for retinal detachment surgery, on 138 pages with numerous illustrations and personal portraits of their inventors and leaders of that particular period. The authors divide the historic development into three periods: The prehistoric era covers the time from the first ophthalmoscope and first surgical attempts to repair retinal detachments up to Gonin's revolutionary invention. The middle age describes refinements in the surgical method with laser, plumage, cerclage and cryotherapy. Finally, the modern era highlights numerous diagnostic and additional surgical modifications to the closed intraocular microsurgery approach, where retinal detachment became a treatable condition and important area in vitreoretinal surgery.

The strength of this book is the well-structured and systematic description. It provides privileged information on the stepwise progress of new technologies, modifications, breakthrough steps and their impact on the progression, but also on drawbacks in redetachment surgery. The progress had many layers: examination optics, surgical techniques, surgical instrumentations, liquids or gasses, equipment and illumination. Numerous and constant improvements over the past 80 years have led to an improvement of the advanced prognosis from barely 30 % to nearly 100 % as of today.

The book also describes the considerable delay before the technique's effectiveness was widely acknowledged, by a period of 10 years, during which Gonin fought bravely to overcome disagreement and skepticism among colleagues. The enforcement of additional developments also required the reputation and recognition of each inventor, his or her character, as well as the constant exchange in journals and meetings with the community of experts. The experienced authors give great insight on the protagonists of each decade and their heritage from Europe, Asia or America. Many anecdotes nicely outline the course of events, and the characters of talented surgeons and inspiring inventors that led to important contributions towards the current approach.

The book gives valuable information for beginners and experienced vitreoretinal surgeons. Today, many young surgeons grow up with the latest vitreoretinal technology; however, they are often no longer aware of previous treatment approaches. The well-respected experience of elderly physicians includes their knowledge of these simplified approaches, as they still may be required in certain conditions or when new, e.g., biomedical solutions, become available on the horizon. The view of the past is essential to understand our current approach, identify as-of-yet unmet needs, and search for their future solutions. In summary, this is a wonderful book than belongs in the library of every retinal department.

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