

An Interesting and Amusing Tour of 4.000 Years of Medicine, Including Ophthalmology

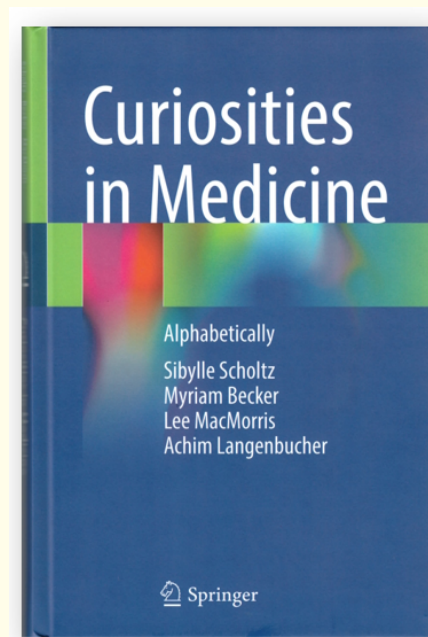
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An interesting and amusing tour of 4.000 years of medicine, including ophthalmology: "Curiosities in Medicine" by Sibylle Scholtz, Myriam Becker, Lee MacMorris, Achim Langenbucher, Springer, Cham (Switzerland) 2023, Hardcover, 306 pages, 48, - Euro, ISBN: 9783031140013.



Maybe these facts should be part of the exam as ophthalmologist? For example, the excitement of the young ophthalmologist Gerd Meyer-Schwickerath, when he watched a spectacle that has fascinated human beings since our inception: a solar eclipse. It was July 10th,

1945, and looking up at the sky made one forget, for a few minutes, the misery and horror of the past few years. Over the next years, Meyer-Schwickerath was fascinated by the idea of using the power of sunlight to... well, what for? Anyone who cannot answer this question should quickly delve into the history of ophthalmology.

The new publication by Sibylle Scholtz, Myriam Becker, Lee MacMorris and Achim Langenbacher "Curiosities in Medicine", offers a very good opportunity. The book, which you hardly want to put down, tells episodes from the history of medicine that are memorable, with ophthalmology being well represented. And, of course, the expert readers would also be familiar with the train of thought that, shortly before that eclipse of the sun, set a doctor on the path to an innovation - and without which, cataract surgery (today's most common surgical intervention in medicine), would hardly be conceivable: Harold Ridley discovered that pilots in the Royal Air Force, whose eyes were penetrated by splinters from their polymethylmethacrylate canopy during air combat, showed no foreign body reaction whatsoever. That was the dawn of the intraocular lens!

In the joint effort of the four authors, which, as a prima inter pares so to speak, one notices above all the handwriting of the enthusiastic medical historian Sibylle Scholtz, the reader encounters not only pioneers, but also famous patients. J.M.W. Turner and Claude Monet, who suffered from cataracts and whose postoperative visual acuity had a not insignificant influence on their late work, are among them, but also beyond ophthalmology, for example Napoleon. The Emperor was far from being physically fit in one of his most important hours, at the battlefield at Waterloo because the Corsican suffered badly from hemorrhoids. How different would Europe have looked if he had achieved his former excellence on that June day in 1815? Such speculations about "What if...?" are frowned upon by academic historians. When you read this, they almost impose themselves. Would we eat köttbullar much more often today than just when visiting Ikea? Would liberal Sweden have shaped our history more than the Prussia of spiked helmets if Gustav II Adolf had not visited Lützen in the enemy territory?

One has to force oneself to stop at this point. Rather offer this advice: Buy this book and enjoy it!

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