DAVID APPLE MD, 1941-2011

Emanuel Rosen pays tribute to the late David Apple, a great pioneer of ophthalmology

David Apple combined a superb intellect with an encyclopaedic knowledge of ophthalmology and ophthalmic pathology, a combination of talents that found an outlet in the practise of cataract surgery at the right time in its evolution. He utilised a vivid imagination with an enquiring mind into the pathological processes that followed from the introduction by Ridley of the placement of an artificial replacement for the cataractous crystalline lens. Clinicians involved in cataract and lens implant surgery battled against the destructive inflammatory processes that threatened to destroy the viability of lens implantation. David attracted talented research fellows to his laboratory many of whom have gone onto personally distinguished careers thanks to his education and guidance in their assistance in solving the many problems caused by entrepreneurial lens implant designs based on an inadequate knowledge of pathophysiological processes in the eye.

David and his ‘Apple Korps’ team were responsible for the discovery of the reasons for the poor clinical outcome of some anterior chamber IOLs, sulcus-based posterior chamber IOLs and pupil supported IOLs. The consequence was the firm establishment of the sequestration of IOLs in the capsular bag to avoid the UGH syndrome. His demonstrations of ocular pathology were seen through the diligent dissection of enucleated implanted eyes and the Apple-Miyake demonstrations of lens implantation anatomy. Amongst many other honours David received the Life Achievement Honour Award by the American Academy of Ophthalmology. He was elected to the ASCRS Ophthalmology Hall of Fame and delivered the ASCRS Innovator’s (Kelman) Lecture and the Binkhorst Lecture. Among his highest academic honours was his election to the German Academy of Research in the Natural Sciences.

David produced the huge textbook on the pathophysiology of lens implantation and subsequently spent several years as Sir Harold Ridley’s official biographer producing his epic book; Sir Harold Ridley and his Fight for Sight. Ridley changed the world so that we may better see it. For the benefit of all ophthalmic practitioners David’s book was in a format that also allowed the general public to perceive the genius and contribution of Sir Harold in rejuvenating the sight of millions of patients. It was fitting indeed that the combined genius of Ridley and Apple combined to make the invention of lens implantation a brilliant and safe reality.

I know that David was proud to participate in what he termed “the golden age of ophthalmology and the visual sciences” despite the resistance he met from vested interests from some surgeons and ophthalmic companies through his pathological revelations.

David was a most assiduous and enthusiastic supporter of the ESCRS and each year he made many unique contributions to our understanding of the pathophysiology of lens implantation. He was awarded the Ridley Gold Medal at the XVII ESCRS Congress, Vienna, Austria, in September 1999.

David is survived by his wife Ann, his most enthusiastic companion and supporter, one stepson, one stepdaughter and two stepgrandchildren.