

## KEYPOINTS

- Multiple sclerosis is a variable lifelong condition. There are several disease patterns, and these clinical subtypes may alter in an individual over time.
- The severity of the condition, in terms of relapse frequency, degree of disability and level of symptoms varies within and between individuals.
- The treatment of MS is aimed at symptoms, relapse and clinical course.
- Steroids are the only drugs shown to be of benefit in acute relapse.
- Beta Interferons, glatiramer acetate, some monoclonal antibodies against adhesion molecules and some chemotherapeutic agents have been shown to alter disease course.
- Future treatments which have not yet been evaluated may include neural growth factors and stem cell therapy.

## REFERENCES

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## A BOOK YOU SHOULD READ

*The Eye*

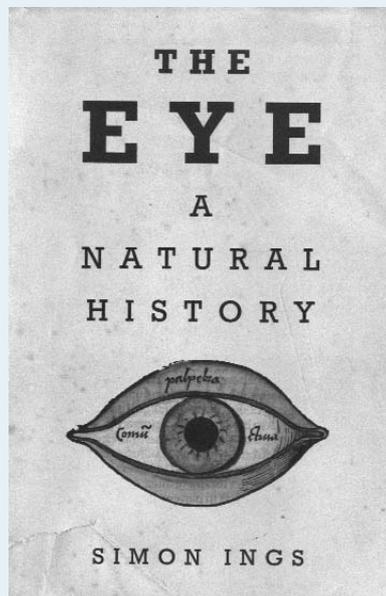
Simon Ings

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Readers, wearied by medical reading, could be forgiven for wondering why they should be encouraged to read yet more medicine in their limited leisure time. Be reassured, this book is unlike any medical text you have ever read. Not that it is always an easy read (there are parts your reviewer still does not understand) as the author buries you under a welter of information. However, do not be put off. This is a fascinating and hugely informative look at vision which, among other things, has undermined my confidence in believing what I see!

Ings' panoramic overview of vision covers archaeology, evolution, genetics, biology, physics, chemistry, philosophy and neuroscience, all considered in the historical context of the gradual advance of human



knowledge and ideas over the centuries. Consideration includes the relation of vision to the other senses, the development in nature of different types of eye, structure and function, colours seen and unseen, and seeing as a cerebral function related to thinking rather than a matter of optics.

A feel for the book comes from

sampling some of its information nuggets. Rhodopsin, the chemical most doctors associate specifically with vision, has been around for some 600 million years (much longer than *Homo sapiens*), and has remained virtually unchanged in that time. Humans have a 180° horizontal field of view, but visual acuity falls quickly to a half more than 1° outside central (foveolar) vision and then to below legal blindness standards beyond 20° from central vision. We may not rate our night vision highly but, in favourable circumstances, we have the capacity to see a single candle flame 17 miles away. Eyes and vision are central to human behaviour; 'We do not merely look at faces. We read them.'

Read this book slowly and refresh your pleasure in learning things you don't need to know. There are innumerable references to the giants of the past, but a good quote to conclude is 'We see nothing, save through reason' (Schopenhauer).

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