

of only three such qualified people in Israel, and the only one in the West Bank and Gaza. Fedra has fitted 458 Palestinian patients. These include 39 children who have suffered from the highly malignant tumour retinoblastoma. In some children the tumour has occurred in both eyes. Correct fitting of the artificial eyes establishes the symmetrical growth of the orbits.

The major cause of the loss of an eye, however, is trauma. Altogether 151 patients have been fitted for cases of accidental eye trauma. "Unfortunately", says Fedra, children are the major recipients of my artificial eyes. Most kids lose their eyes in what seem to be preventable accidents. The child trips and falls on the edge of a door. Palestinian children often throw stones and play with slingshots, and these practices account for many eyes lost. One poor little girl stepped on a mop and the handle hit her in the face. Another young boy could not open a bottle of nail polish and decided to heat it on the stove; it blew up and he lost his right eye." Ninety-seven patients were fitted because of general eye disease. "The end stage of many eye conditions is a red, blind painful eye which the suffering patient often asks to have removed. Diabetes, retinal detachment, glaucoma and tumours often produce these painful eyes."

Another group of children for whom Fedra fits prosthetic eyes are those suffering from congenital eye disease - 41 children in all. This group includes cases of anophthalmia, microphthalmia, colobomatous malformations and congenital glaucoma. Fedra points out that for this group the correct fitting of the prosthesis is particularly im-

portant to ensure the correct growth of the orbit; if the socket is not fitted every two months for a baby then it contracts, producing a disfiguring deformity, with the forehead growing prominently over the contracted socket. One mother brought in her twenty-two year old daughter recently; she had neglected to have her properly fitted as a baby, and it was simply not possible to fit anything to the grossly contracted socket. The most publicised cause of eye trauma is, of course, the current political unrest. In the first three years of the Intifada, Fedra fitted 130 patients. Sixty lost their eyes owing to rubber bullets, 64 owing to ordinary bullets and 6 owing to explosive devices. One unfortunate twenty-one year old was digging in his garden and struck an unexploded bomb; he lost both eyes and his right arm as well.

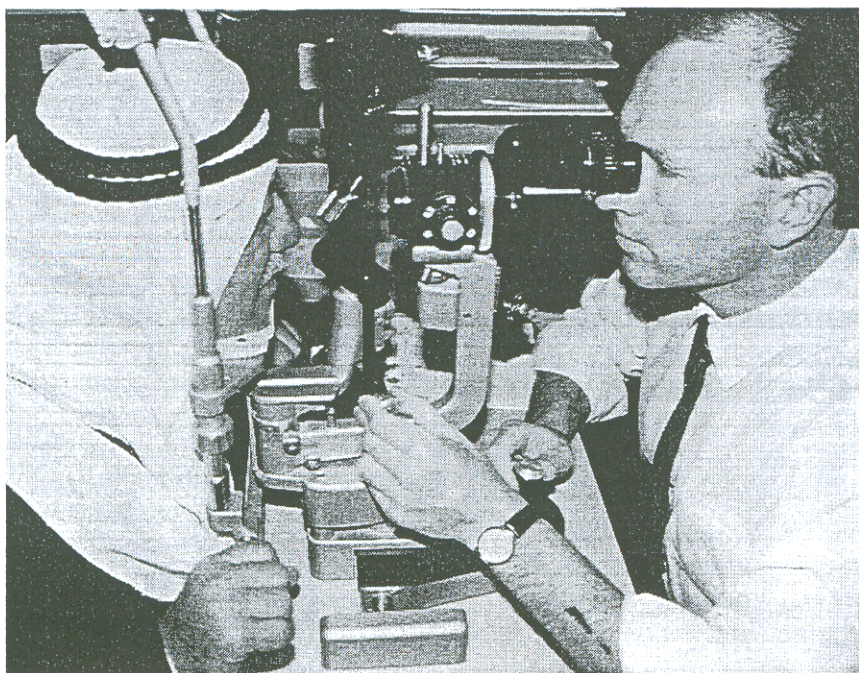
"Some patients actually think that they will recover their sight if fitted with a prosthetic eye", says Fedra. Typical of these cases was the mother whose child had a phthisical blind eye and who asked if the fitting of an artificial eye would bring her son's sight back. Sadly, Fedra had to tell her patient, as she tells many others, that the eyes are fitted for cosmetic reasons and cannot make them see again!

The Ocular Prosthetics department at St John has been in operation for twelve months and was initiated in the general process of improving the facilities available to St John patients. Already many have been fitted and received advice, help and encouragement enabling them to cope with the care and management of their prostheses. Many patients, especially the young and the teenagers, who may have felt that their lives were over, in this way receive the support necessary to return to a normal life.

John O'Shea 27.1.94

THE HEBRON MASSACRE AND ITS AFTERMATH

I will never forget the events of Friday 25 February 1993. It was a day unprecedented in my experience. Perhaps the only experience of similar gravity that I can recall was listening to an old scratchy recording of Roosevelt's speech on the bombing of Pearl



Dr Peter Cooper, from Australia, examines a patient