

# THE HISTORY OF CONTACT LENSES

Volume One

**Early Neutralizations of the Corneal Dioptric Power**

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# Preface

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the first part of the History of Contact Lenses. In the course of the nine chapters of this first volume, I describe the History of the Early Neutralizations of the Corneal Dioptric Power.

It is essential to understand that the history of this preliminary step, to the extent that it is described in the historical introductions of classical contact lens treatises, does not always correspond with the thorough objective criteria of the historical sciences. In order to allow readers to make up their own minds; I felt it necessary to present the original description or basic texts, together with translations and critical analysis of these. I have positioned these documents in the context of their author's work and of the state of knowledge of the epoch in which they were written. A short citation of several of the most current contemporary interpretations, often with mistakes, anachronisms and ambiguities thereto pertaining closes each chapter.

Readers will also find interesting pearls of knowledge if they consult the transcriptions of the original versions of the pivotal texts contained in the appendix. Also, they should refer to the articles cited in the bibliography as well as deepening their knowledge of the biographical notices of the quoted names of this history.

This History of Contact Lenses is the result of a combination of three sets of circumstances:

- the historical and geographical privilege of living in Alsace, cradle of Rhenish humanism and beneficiary of both French and German culture. Every conflict between the European nations has left its mark, conquerors being forced, as soon as peace is restored, to construct libraries there and to enrich these with their best known works and archives,
- I have a passionate fondness for history, first of all for the history of my city and my region, secondly for medical history, which is the history of my profession. This passion resulted in my collecting documents relating to the history of contact lenses over a period exceeding thirty years, along with exploration of the various locales, presentation of papers at congresses, publications of articles and clarifications,
- finally, I have dedicated five years exclusively to research projects in libraries, archives, museums and collections with the aim of verifying documents (1). My first compilation of these researches took the form of a doctoral thesis in historical and philological sciences that was defended in Paris in January 2001.

This History of Contact Lenses would not have seen the light of day, had it not been for the collaboration of many different organizations and individuals to whom I am greatly indebted and to whom thanks are due :

- the directors of the many scientific societies and institutions who have allowed me to express my views within their walls and thus submit my opinions to their members and associates (2),
- The German publishing house Enke of Stuttgart for entrusting me with the journal editorship of Contactologia. This privilege permitted me to give voice to historical witnesses and to allow researchers to describe the results of their studies,
- The director of my doctoral thesis in historical and philological sciences as well as the pres-

ident and members of the jury for my thesis, whose advice helped me to a first version of this project,

- numerous enthusiasts of the history of ophthalmology, visual sciences, optics and contact lenses. Our discussions and exchanges, often passionate, sometimes almost confrontational, have permitted clarification of many a litigious point. The ties with colleagues produced by these encounters have often resulted in a deep friendship, linked by a mutual interest in historical research,

- the publisher Jean-Paul Wayenborgh, who believed in the interest of an in-depth publication, even encyclopedic, of The History of Contact Lenses and has put his resources, his warm personality and his enormous enthusiasm at my disposition as well as including this History in his prestigious series of Hirschberg's History of Ophthalmology,

- particular credit should be given to my translator, Colin Mailer FRCS (C) of London ON, Canada for his passionate interest in a job well done and who has not only used his considerable knowledge but has also made prodigious efforts to render as closely as possible the style and sense of the original text.

Editions Wayenborgh are committed to the publication of The History of Contact Lenses. In order that this process may continue, I appeal for the help and collaboration of all persons who are passionately interested in the history of contact lenses. I am making this appeal with particular regard to those chapters relating to the second half of the twentieth century. I appeal to the witnesses of this epoch and solicit the collaboration of those people responsible for making recent history. Only in this way will The History of Contact Lenses be able to fulfill the role the publisher has assigned, which is to provide a reference work for future generations.

I hope you really enjoy reading this volume!

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*(2) European Contact Lens Society (ECLSO), Contact Lens Association of Ophthalmologists (CLAO), Société Française des Ophtalmologistes Adapteurs de Prothèses de Contact (SFOAPC), Arbeitsgruppe Kontaktlinsen des Berufsverband der Augenärzte Deutschlands (BVA), Société Belge des Verres de Contact (SOBEVECO), Cogan Ophthalmic History Society, Julius-Hirschberg-Gesellschaft für Geschichte der Augenheilkunde (JHG), Société Francophone d'Histoire de l'Ophtalmologie (SFHO), and many others.*

**PART 1**

**EARLY NEUTRALIZATIONS  
OF  
THE CORNEAL DIOPTRIC POWER**