Removal of surgical drains

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Occasionally, a drain is caught within surrounding soft tissue during closure of a surgical wound. This is clinically difficult to differentiate with a drain that has been inadvertently sutured into the wound. Upon attempted removal, in either situation, the drain may stretch or break and require surgical extraction.

A useful technique when faced with this is the application of constant traction on the drain with weights. These can be increased by 5 lb every 15 min until the drain falls out by itself (Fig. 1), thereby avoiding another general anaesthetic and freeing up a member of staff.

Figure 1 Removal of drain using traction.

IMPORTANT OBSERVATIONS

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Surgeons are faced on a daily basis with living pathology and physiology. Accordingly, it is inevitable that from time to time, observations are made which lead to 'armchair hypothesising'. For example, many years ago, I was referred two women who had suffered seat belt injury to their breasts (one was the driver and the left breast was involved, the other a passenger and the right breast was involved). The trauma was severe and, within 6 months, each developed cancer in the traumatised breast. Could trauma be a cause of breast cancer I hypothesised? What a ridiculous suggestion you might say – but what if...?

Most hypotheses based on anecdotal observations are nonsense but, just occasionally, a gem develops, *e.g.* Fleming and penicillin. It is also possible that surgeons are too embarrassed to mention such observations and certainly do not have the facilities or expertise to develop and investigate their pet hypothesis.

I invite surgeons who have made an 'outrageous' observation resulting in a 'ridiculous' hypothesis to submit their 'concept' to the *Annals*. It will be subjected to expert peer review and, should it be deemed of possible importance or worthy of confirmation, will be published in the *Annals*. Such articles should be no more than 200 words or 150 words if accompanied by a figure. Don't be shy – your observation may have clinical importance and could generate a hypothesis worthy of confirmation.

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Editor-in-Chief