Use of plastic gallipot to protect soft tissues during insertion of static cement spacer in revision total knee arthroplasty

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BACKGROUND

The surgical treatment of infected knee replacements often requires a two-stage revision. As part of the first stage, following removal of the implants and appropriate debridement, a static antibiotic impregnated cement spacer is inserted. Often the void left after implant removal and debridement can be quite large. We present a novel method of using a cut part of a standard plastic gallipot to protect the soft tissues at the back of the knee during the packing of cement into the joint space.

Figure 1 A portion of the gallipot cut to size

TECHNIQUE

After implant removal, debridement and washout, the soft tissue protector is prepared by cutting a portion of the plastic gallipot to size (Fig 1). This is then placed in the open knee joint so that it covers the soft tissues posteriorly. The remaining joint space is filled with cement while the soft tissue protector is left in situ (Fig 2). The leg is held in its anatomical position as the cement sets. The soft tissue protector can then be slid out from behind the cement spacer (Fig 3).

DISCUSSION

'We have used this technique as a cheap and effective way of protecting the soft tissues at the back of the knee joint and maintaining the shape of the static cement spacer while it sets. It is easily inserted and removed, and the gallipot from which it is made is readily available in most surgical equipment sets.'

Figure 2 Joint space filled with cement with soft tissue protector in situ

Figure 3 Soft tissue protector being slid out from behind cement spacer