Table 1 Gauges of hypodermic needles that accommodate different suture sizes

Needle		
Thread size	Gauge	Colour
1, 0, 2/0	21	Green
3/0, 4/0	23	Blue
5/0, 6/0	25	Orange

A heavy needle holder is used to crush that end of the needle and to secure the thread (Figs 1 and 2). This needle is then used to complete the final few stitches or to pass the thread extradermally and to start a new stitch.

DISCUSSION

The simple technique described here allows securing a hypodermic needle to the broken thread to be used as a temporary suturing needle.

Endotracheal tube for the emergency abdominal surgeon

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Figure 1 The end of the hypodermic needle containing the suture thread is crushed using a heavy needle holder.

A size 9 cuffed endotracheal tube can be used to decompress the obstructed colon in cases where resection is deemed unsuitable and emergency diversion is required. It can be purse-stringed into the colon and brought out through the abdominal wall (Fig 1). The authors recently used this technique in an elderly lady with disseminated ovarian carcinomatosis, presenting with closed loop large bowel obstruction. Her abdomen was extremely hostile secondary to omental caking and the caecum was inaccessible. This technique is helpful in challenging cases and the authors advocate it as a ‘get out of jail’ option for the emergency surgeon.

Figure 2 The hypodermic needle is secured to the suture thread.

Figure 1 Endotracheal tube in place