Technical Section [TECHNICAL NOTES AND TIPS

Finger rolls: an improvised applicator for atraumatic, sterile application of finger tourniquets

H Rehman

Trauma and Orthopaedics, Aberdeen Royal Infirmary,
Foresterhill, Aberdeen, UK

CORRESPONDENCE TO

Haroon Rehman, E: haroon.rehman.06@aberdeen.ac.uk
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BACKGROUND

Digital tourniquets are an essential adjunct to hand surgery. Distal finger wounds are often treated under ring block and tourniquet alone. In severe soft tissue injuries of the digit, application of the digital tourniquet can result in further trauma. Traditionally, these tourniquets are

Figure 1 Using a scalpel to cut the barrel circumferentially

Figure 2 Tourniquet applied to the syringe

Figure 3 Engaging the target finger

Figure 4 Rolling the tourniquet proximally

rolled from distal to proximal along the digit or stretched and dropped. We describe a novel, user-friendly technique for applying tourniquets to fingers with severe distal injuries.

TECHNIQUE

The hand is prepared and draped conventionally. The tip and part of the barrel of a wide sterile syringe is cut off. We recommend using a scalpel to stab the syringe with controlled pressure. Once the blade penetrates the plastic, controlled pressure downwards and away should be applied to cut the barrel circumferentially (Fig 1).

Directing the scalpel away from oneself minimises the risk of injury to the user; nonetheless caution should be exercised throughout. The

plunger should be removed. The tourniquet is stretched and applied to the syringe (Fig 2), which subsequently engages the target finger (Fig 3). The tourniquet can be rolled proximally without insulting distal injuries (Fig 4).

DISCUSSION

This technique is inexpensive and conceptually straightforward. Although commercially available finger-dressing applicators could be used in a similar fashion, they are often not sterilised. This technique is ideal for distal avulsion-type or crush injuries of the fingers.

A folded up treatment sheet is preferable to a sandbag

P Haggis, S Evans

Chelsea and Westminster Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, UK

CORRESPONDENCE TO

Paul Haggis, E: paul.haggis@doctors.net.uk
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Patients are often positioned using sandbags in orthopaedic surgery. However, sandbags are radio-opaque and therefore obscure image intensifier images. We recommend the use of treatment sheets,* folded up and taped together (Fig 1). As well as being radiolucent, we find them advantageous in terms of affording better grip (sandbags have a tendency to slip away from the patient), and being cheap, quick and easy to create. They are also disposable, which may help prevent infection transmission.

*Footnote requested by the Technical Section Editor:

Treatment sheets are often referred to incorrectly as 'incopads'; however, they have an important difference. An incontinence pad is used to keep an incontinent patient dry, in order to prevent skin breakdown. Although a treatment sheet absorbs fluid, it still feels wet to the touch and therefore cannot be used for this purpose.

Figure 1 A folded up treatment sheet next to a sandbag

An emergency back-up light source for flexible cystoscopy can be found in most of our pockets

A Robinson, B Lovell-Viggers, N Arumainayagam

St Peter's Hospital, Chertsey, Surrey, UK

CORRESPONDENCE TO

Alexander Edward Robinson, E: robinson.a@gmail.com
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Background

A recent Medline search showed 390 articles which mention 'iPhone' in either the title or abstract. The majority of these make use of the camera to perform telemedicine or even fundoscopy.¹ No publications to date mention the use of a smartphone as a light source.

A flexible cystoscopic-assisted catheter insertion is often the last option before more invasive procedures such as a suprapubic catheterisation or rigid cystoscopy under general anaesthesia in emergency situations. Therefore, failure when using equipment remotely can be time consuming and may necessitate more invasive procedures. Here, we present a novel light source, a smartphone, for use with a flexible cystoscope.

Technique

When confronted with a light lead that does not fit the light source, light source failure or if a conventional light source is not available, ask an assistant to turn on the 'flashlight' on a smartphone. Place the proximal end of the light lead over the light source and hold it in place (Fig 1).

Discussion

The flashlight provides ample light to place a guidewire during urethroscopy and subsequent catheter insertion. When equipment fails or is unavailable, this technique negates the need for a conventional light source, allowing safe urethral visualisation, guidewire insertion and catheterisation.

Figure 1 Smartphone light source