

Letters To Editor

A simple method to make marking ink indelible

Dear Sir,
Fading of preoperative skin markings following scrubbing is a frequent problem. Presented is a simple method using tincture benzoin, to decrease the chances of erasure of these marks after scrubbing.

This method helps in scrub-resistant marking. Thus preoperative marking is retained even after scrubbing.

The so-called permanent skin markers (Marking pens, methylene blue, gentian violet etc.) frequently disappear or get severely smudged after scrubbing. To avoid this, henna^[1] has been used for marking, but this has to be applied well before surgery (at least two to four hours). Scratching with a needle after anaesthesia, but before scrubbing, can also be done, which can leave annoying linear abrasions, visible in the postoperative period.

Using the concept first mentioned by Fritschi,^[2] we have been using tincture benzoin compound to make marking indelible.

The procedure in short is as follows:

Step 1: The marking is done. Then the benzoin is applied and allowed to dry [Figure 1].

Step 2: Scrubbing using povidone iodine scrub is carried out [Figure 2].

We find that this combination withstands scrubbing with

all solutions except surgical spirit, though the marking becomes slightly faint [Figure 3]. No adverse reactions have been observed.

Tincture benzoin becomes non-sticky as soon as it dries up. Also, scrubbing takes away its stickiness.

Though the marking fades after use of alcohol-based solution, it is definitely resistant to povidone iodine scrub and chlorhexidine.

Tincture benzoin is applied after marking as against the method of Fritschi where tincture iodine is applied before marking. By doing marking first, one has a certain area where tincture benzoin is to be applied and unnecessary areas are not exposed to tincture benzoin. If tincture iodine is used, one may have to apply it to random areas OR one has to be very much sure about marking.

Tincture benzoin is freely available.

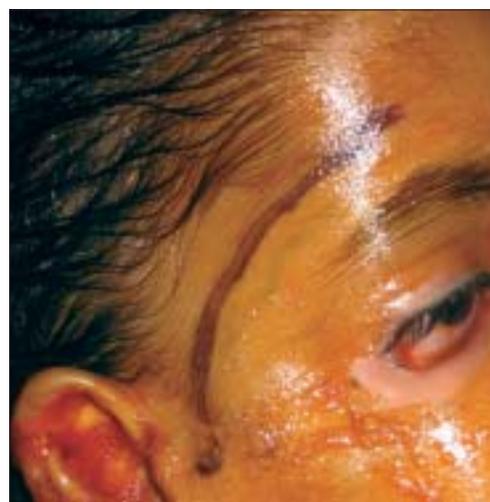


Figure 2: After scrubbing



Figure 1: Before scrubbing



Figure 3: Final marking

Sterility of tincture benzoin should not be a problem as tincture benzoin itself is an antiseptic and scrubbing the part (which is done after application of tincture benzoin) will confirm asepsis.

Maksud Devale, Mukund Jagannathan

Department of Plastic Surgery, LTMG Hospital, Sion,
Mumbai, India

Address for correspondence: Dr. Maksud Devale, Department of Plastic Surgery, Room 450, 4th floor, College Building, LTMG Hospital, Sion, Mumbai, India.
E-mail: maksuddevale@yahoo.co.in

REFERENCES

1. Puri VA, Mahendru S, Rana RE. Use of henna as a skin marker. *J Plast Reconstr Aesthet Surg* 2006;59:1123-4.
2. Fritschi EP. Reconstructive surgery in leprosy. John Wright and Sons: Bristol, England; 1971. p. 119.