

The Sommerlad pen: Yet another use

Sir,

Often, it is difficult to curette the bone intra-operatively, particularly on the condylar surfaces of the fingers, when performing debridement of the joints, or after “nibbling back”. Often, on a basic hand set that is normally at the registrar on-call’s disposal, there are inadequate instruments available to smooth these often sharp articular surfaces. These sharp fragments of bone can also cause trauma not only to the surrounding soft tissue, and other vital adjacent structures, but also cause damage to the surgeon and the scrub nurse.

Many uses of the Sommerlad pen have been described since its invention almost 40 years ago.^[1] The author feels that yet another use can be added to the list. This instrument is available on most basic handsets and has a serrated, crazed circumference, which appears like a conical cylindrical file. This can be used to file down bony fragments to ensure a smooth condylar surface of the bone, thereby reducing the chance of inadvertent injury, damage to tissues, as well as avoiding the use of bony nibblers that

may be inappropriately large for this delicate part of the procedure.^[2] No other instruments available on basic hand sets nor on complex hand sets allow this technique to be replicated as the instruments are too bulky, heavy or do not grip the bone surface well enough. The Sommerlad pen can be held like a nail-file or Emery board to facilitate reducing bony prominences after fractures or trauma to the condylar surfaces.^[3,4]

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