

A new approach to the problems encountered with Opsite as a donor site dressing: systemic ethamsylate

Sir

Any method to improve the care of donor sites is to be welcomed, but I wonder if the routine use of a systemic agent such as ethamsylate (J. D. Richmond and A. B. Sutherland, *British Journal of Plastic Surgery*, 1986, **39**, 516) can be justified?

The only significant problem with the use of Opsite is the leakage of the exudate: ignoring this exudate by applying a bulky circumferential bandage of cotton wool and crepe over the Opsite has given no trouble. The exudate simply escapes into the dressing, which is left undisturbed for about 7 days. Only if there is pain need the dressing be removed sooner as this indicates slippage of the Opsite which will require to be replaced. After a week the Opsite is usually adherent to the re-epithelialised donor site. The sheet is then best not removed completely but trimmed to the edges of the donor site and left exposed to separate spontaneously.

Using this regime, Opsite is easy to use and complications are minimal.

Yours faithfully
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Reply from Mr Richmond

Sir

Mr James wonders "if the routine use of a systemic agent such as ethamsylate can be justified". So do I. It reduced but did not eliminate the problems which prompted the study. However, there are no reported incidences in the medical literature of any patient having suffered any major adverse effects as a result of its administration.

Mr James claims that, using his own regimen (which was that selected for the control group in my own study), "Opsite is easy to use and complications are minimal". It is indeed easy to apply and morbidity is uncommon. Nevertheless problems with exudate are the main drawback. If I may quote from James and Watson (*British Journal of Plastic Surgery*, 1975, **28**, 107), "The comments of the nursing staff were variable", "... not ideal, because of fluid collection and leakage" and "The necessity for repeated repadding in the early stages was a source of criticism".

Up till now, those who have tried to reduce these problems have offered methods of collecting the exudate. My own study was the first to look at the possibility of reducing its volume.

Yours faithfully
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