To
The Editor,
Online journal of Otolaryngology

Dear Sir,

The review article “BIPP (Bismuth Iodine Paraffine Paste) Pack revisited,” by Dr. T. Balasubramanian sheds light on BIPP packing. Used extensively in pre-penicillin era, this armamentarium in the hands of the otolaryngologist is almost obsolete.

It has the following disadvantages, as a result of which its use has been discontinued:

1) Toxicity to bismuth
2) Toxicity to iodoform
3) Increased pain, both due to BIPP nasal pack and during pack removal
4) Septal perforation following BIPP pack
5) Vestibulitis following BIPP pack
6) Unpleasant smell

However, BIPP is still in use at some centres. Paulose, has mentioned on his website that he uses BIPP packing after mastoidectomy.

An alternate formulation, Whitehead’s varnish, an iodoform compound, is a safer alternative to B.I.P.P. gauze.

The constituents of Whitehead’s varnish are:
(i) Iodoform 10 gm
(ii) Benzoin 10 gm
(iii) Starch 7.5 gm
(iv) Natural balsams 5 gm
(v) Solvent ether to 100 ml.
Iodoform has an anaesthetic action on mucosal surfaces and this contributes to amelioration of pain\(^5\). Also, it’s application to tissues leads to slow release of elemental iodine which exerts a disinfectant effect\(^5\).

Cascarini\(^6\) has stated that Whitehead’s varnish has many applications, which includes packing of the nose and in the mouth. It’s constituent aromatic resins break down to produce benzoic acid, which is an antiseptic. In addition, its waterproofing property confers an advantage.

References:


6) Cascarini L. What is Whitehead’s Varnish and who was Walter Whitehead? \textit{LSJM} 2009 November)Volume 01:pp 121.

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