



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 it's use has been discontinued :

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

However,BIPP is still in use at some centres.Paulose<sup>4</sup>, 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.<sup>2</sup>

The constituents of Whitehead's varnish are<sup>5</sup>:

- (i)Iodoform 10 gm
- (ii)benzoin 10 gm
- (iii)Starch7.5 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<sup>5</sup>. Also, its application to tissues leads to slow release of elemental iodine which exerts a disinfectant effect<sup>5</sup>.

Cascarini<sup>6</sup> has stated that Whitehead's varnish has many applications, which includes packing of the nose and in the mouth. Its constituent aromatic resins break down to produce benzoic acid, which is an antiseptic. In addition, its waterproofing property confers an advantage.

#### References:

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- 3) Marcelle V., Robinson P., and Ryan R. Nasal packing after routine nasal surgery—is it justified? *The Journal of Laryngology & Otolology* (1993), 107 : pp 902-905
- 4) Paulose K.O. Website: Good old remedies in ENT- BIPP – Bismuth iodoform paraffin paste. Available at <http://www.drpaulose.com/general/587> (Accessed on 18th Dec 2011)
- 5) Stanley D, Emerson D. J., Daley J. C. Whitehead's varnish and Jelonet--a better dressing for skin graft donor sites than Jelonet alone. *Ann R Coll Surg Engl.* 1988 November; 70(6): 369–371
- 6) Cascarini L. What is Whitehead's Varnish and who was Walter Whitehead? *LSJM* 2009 November) Volume 01: pp 121.

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