



Saline – An Underrated Operative Aide

Ahmad Z*

Department of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, Odstock Centre for Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, Salisbury District Hospital, UK

Commentary

Normal saline solution (NaCl 0.9%) is ubiquitously available in theatre, and it is often things which we readily have at our disposal we may take for granted or may not derive the maximum benefit from them. A litre bag of saline costs yet it is arguably one of the most useful items available in theatre. The author would like to share three tips using saline in theatre. When closing wounds, particularly when using a braided suture such as Vicryl or Vicryl Rapide, the suture often curls up, and is often difficult to handle. Before loading the suture on the needle holder, if the suture is gently soaked in saline, the suture not only handles better, it causes less damage when penetrating the skin in wound closure. Optimal wound closure results from minimal trauma at the skin edge as the braided suture is passed through on its arc and then pulled through. Sometimes it can be difficult to tell which way up a skin graft is particularly if it has been harvested very thin. Pouring a few drops of saline onto the skin graft leads to the skin graft curling up. The skin graft curls up and involutes on the side the saline is poured on to. And finally, when applying dressings, often jelonet and mepitel non-adherent dressings are often used to dress wounds. Handling mepitel a sticky silicone sheet dressing can be tricky. Often it can stick to the surgeon's gloves causing the need for another dressing and further delays. Wetting the mepitel allows the surgeon to handle the dressing as he or she wishes without it sticking to gloves, all the while the dressing behaves as it should do.

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*Correspondence:

Ahmad Z, Department of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, Odstock Centre for Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery, Salisbury District Hospital, Salisbury, Wiltshire, SP2 8BJ, UK, E-mail: zeeshan.ahmad@doctors.org.uk

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