

The Jepson whistle: a simple device for laryngectomees

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Abstract

A simply manufactured whistle for the use of laryngectomees is described. It is useful for attracting attention in an emergency.

Key words: Laryngectomy; Larynx artificial

Introduction

After laryngectomy the majority of patients regain enough voice to allow a degree of communication, using tracheoesophageal valves (Parker *et al.*, 1992), oesophageal speech (Mjones *et al.*, 1991) or mechanical vibrators (Pindzola and Moffet, 1988). However in an emergency they are unable to attract attention by shouting. We describe a simple, easily manufactured device to overcome this problem.

Method

A 69-year-old man (the first author: RHJ) underwent total laryngectomy in June 1992. His post-operative recovery was unremarkable. Two months later he fell into a ditch while out walking and was unable to summon assistance. Luckily he was able to extricate himself unaided. Being of a practical disposition he set about devising a solution to the problem. Several designs were rejected as being over-complicated before he arrived at the simple device described here.

The internal end of a 14 mm silastic stoma button [Medasil (Surgical) Ltd] was removed with a knife. This allowed the

remaining tube to be passed over the mouthpiece of a split-pea whistle (Figure 1). The external end of the stoma button was then placed over a tracheostomy tube or stoma whenever needed by the patient (Figure 2). A good seal was obtained even with an irregular tracheostome. Exhalation of air produces a loud whistle as required.



FIG. 1
The Jepson whistle.

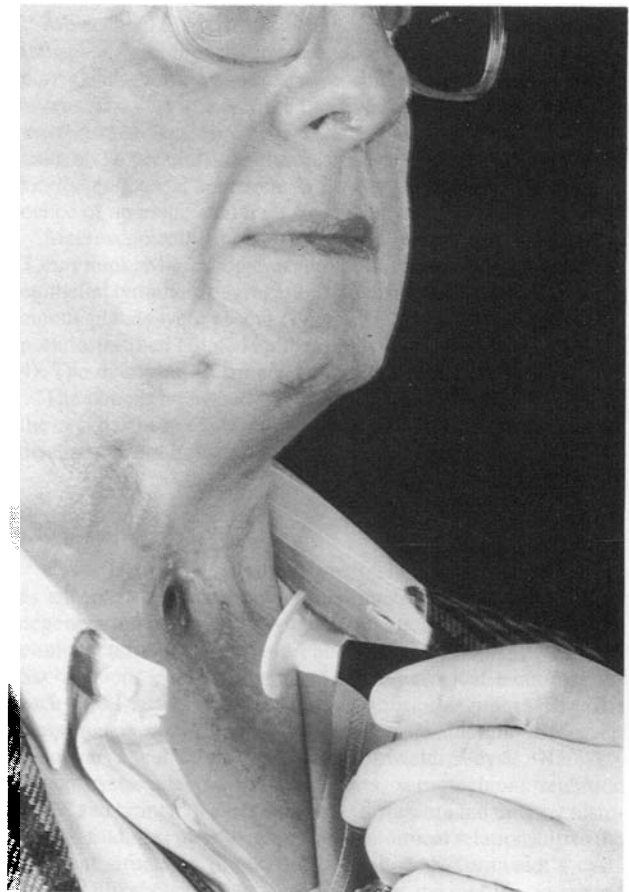


FIG. 2
The whistle may be applied to a tracheostomy tube or a stoma.

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Discussion

RHJ (the first author) always wears a Jepson whistle hanging around his neck on a cord to summon help if needed. He also finds it useful to attract the attention of his four-year-old grandson when out walking. We have examined this device in some detail and are convinced that in spite of its great simplicity it deserves greater dissemination amongst those post-laryngectomy patients who may benefit from its use.

References

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