

## Protection of tympanomeatal flaps using Visibility Background Material

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### Abstract

**Background:** Over the years, various materials have been used by otologists to protect tympanomeatal flaps from damage by suction equipment or drills.

**Objective:** This report aims to describe the use of Mercian's Visibility Background Material® (an inert, silicone-based material licensed for use in the human body, which does not get caught in drill flukes) to protect tympanomeatal flaps.

**Conclusion:** We have used this material for over 12 months, without any complications.

**Key words:** Tympanoplasty; Otologic Surgical Procedures

Following elevation of the tympanomeatal flap, otologists have described various methods for protecting the flap from damage. These include using a piece of aluminium foil from the suture material cover, or a circular piece of Silastic® sheeting.<sup>1,2</sup> Damage to the flap occurs with overzealous use of suction, or when drilling (e.g. whilst fashioning an atticotomy).

Over the last 12 months, the senior author (AI) has used Mercian's Visibility Background Material® (Mercian Surgical Supply, Birmingham, UK) to protect tympanomeatal

flaps (Figure 1). No complications have been encountered with this inert material. The skin, when preserved, can assist epithelialisation of the cavity.

Mercian's Visibility Background Material is made of silicone. It is latex-free and contains barium to make it radio-paque (should it be 'misplaced'). It has been designed and used mainly for microsurgical anastomosis of vessels, to aid visualisation. It is available in three colours: yellow, blue and green. As opposed to such materials as suture packets (used by many), Visibility Background Material

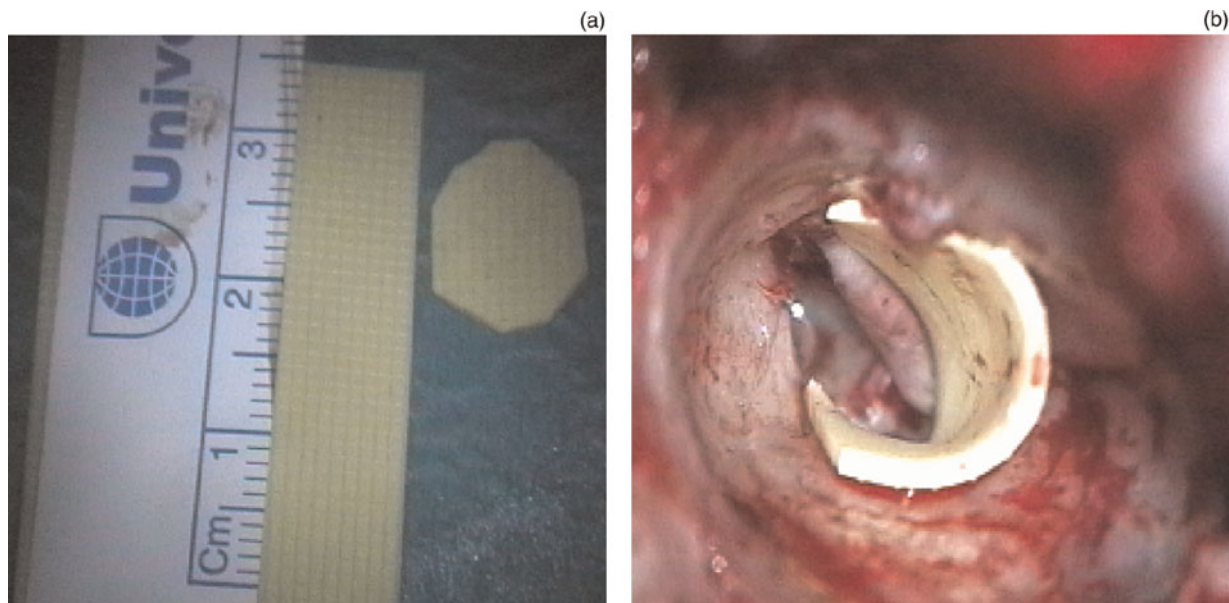


FIG. 1

(a) Visibility Background Material®. (b) & (c) Use of Visibility Background Material to protect a tympanomeatal flap during a right atticotomy.

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Accepted for publication: 28 January 2010. First published online 7 April 2010.

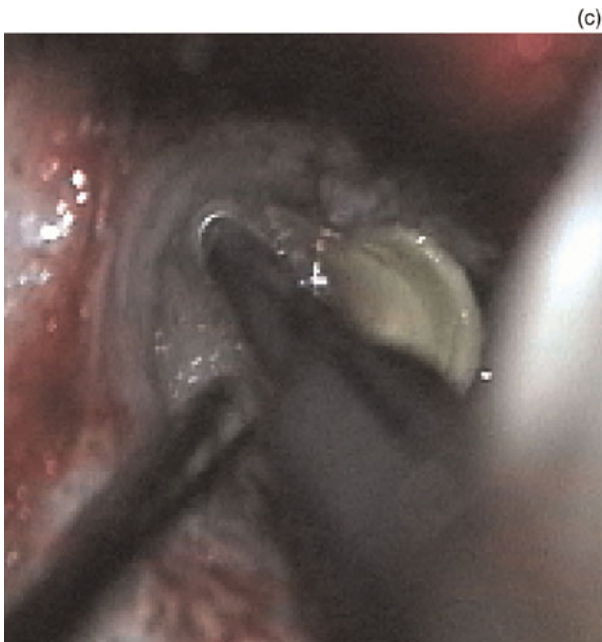


FIG. 1  
Continued.

is licensed for use inside the human body. In addition, it has a non-reflective surface, which is important when working with an operating microscope.

There are 12 pieces of Visibility Background Material per box, each measuring  $50 \times 25$  mm. The material is economical, at £8 per sheet.

We use a small piece cut in the shape of the tympanic membrane (diameter approximately 1 cm). Even if touched by a moving burr, Visibility Background Material is not caught in the burr flukes, unlike other materials (e.g. aluminium foil or cottonoids).

We have used Visibility Background Material for over 12 months, without any complications.

#### References

- 1 Mancini F, Russo A, Sanna M. Grafting techniques for tympanoplasty. *Operative Techniques in Otolaryngology-Head and Neck Surgery* 1996;**7**:34–7
- 2 Leliever WC. Flap protection in exostosis surgery. *Laryngoscope* 1985;**95**:1126–7

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Miss N B Oozeer takes responsibility for the integrity of the content of the paper.  
Competing interests: None declared

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