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CORRESPONDENCE

One More Use of a Vinyl Glove: Ready-Made Protection for the Reusable Pulse Oximeter Monitoring Probe

To the Editor.—Technical difficulties in obtaining reliable oxygen saturation (S_{\text{O}_2}) readings with the pulse oximeter are frequently encountered. These occur in patients in whom peripheral vasoconstriction is present or in patients with anatomic abnormalities (earlobe) or severe injuries to the extremities.

In such circumstances, a clip-on probe can be positioned on the nasal septum, the lips, or the tongue but there is unavoidable contact with the mucous membranes.

In these cases the question of hygiene and contamination arises together with the problem of disinfection if a reusable probe is being used.

Recently, Acherman\textsuperscript{a} studied the effect of a vinyl glove interposed between the pulse oximeter probe and the finger and found no significant difference between the S_{\text{O}_2} readings of the gloved or ungloved finger.

To protect the oxygen saturation monitor probe from the mucous membranes, we use a 2–3 cm long piece from the finger of a vinyl glove, which easily fits over the probe (fig. 1).

Using the covered ear probe of the Ohmeda oximeter (Ohmeda, Boulder, CO) on the lips (fig. 2). S_{\text{O}_2} readings, even in patients with severe vasoconstriction correlated closely with arterial blood saturation measurements.

With this inexpensive, readily available protection, the maintenance of the probe is easier, the contamination less likely, and the lifetime of the probe can be prolonged.

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FIG. 1. Clip-on probe of oximeter with protective sheath.

FIG. 2. Covered probe with protective sheath placed on the upper lip.