Beware of Sharp Edges in Metal Endotracheal Tubes

To the Editor—Use of laser energy is a proven advance in laryngeal surgery. However, rubber and plastic tracheal tubes burn when they are not protected adequately from the energy beam. One solution, first proposed by Norton et al., is the use of a flexible metal tube. Not only is it nonflammable, but it also reflects the laser beam and dissipates its energy evenly and rapidly.

We wish to draw attention to a defect in the commercially available metal tubes which we purchased from the American V. Mueller Company. Figure 1 shows that at the joint between the tip and the flexible portion of the tube, there is a sharp edge which could damage delicate tracheal tissues. We suggest that these metal tubes be inspected closely for sharp edges, and if found, to have them ground to appropriate smoothness, or to have a smooth tip professionally turned for welding to the flexible portion.

In reply—American V. Mueller was pleased to assist in the development of the Norton Endotracheal Tube as designed by M. L. Norton, M.D. American V. Mueller has sold this metal endotracheal tube for use during laser surgery over the past five years. Only recently has American V. Mueller become aware that the lipped edge between the flexible tube and the distal tip may be of concern.

American V. Mueller agrees that there should be a smooth interface between the flexible tubing and the distal tip. Therefore, in the future endotracheal tubes will be manufactured with this modified design.

American V. Mueller appreciates receiving comments regarding our products and this opportunity to respond to this letter to the editor.

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