GADGETS

A Buccal Mask

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Currently available face masks may have several drawbacks. They have to be available in a range of sizes, they may leave pressure marks on the face and most types increase dead-space. Also, it is often difficult to achieve a good fit in edentulous patients, and in patients who have beards, burns of the face, facio-maxillary injuries or a naso-gastric tube in situ.

To circumvent these difficulties a buccal mask† was designed (fig. 1). It fits between the lips and gums. Because it has a considerably smaller capacity than most conventional masks and it is applied intra-orally, it causes relatively little increase in dead-space. To minimize soft tissue injury it is made of soft rubber.

Its distal opening is oval to accommodate the flange of an oropharyngeal airway. If there is a leak of gases through the nose a nose clip is used.

During two years of use it was found that the same size mask can be used for all patients above the age of seven. With a buccal mask a good fit can be obtained in many patients where this would not have been possible with conventional masks. There is the added advantage that in the edentulous patient it will prevent the apposition of the lips. For positive pressure respiration the lips are held by the thumb and forefinger against the mask to ensure an airtight fit.

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Fig. 1. Upper: View of buccal mask. Lower: Buccal mask in use.