

Surgical pearl: Chemical vial for cautery

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Dear Editor,

Trichloroacetic acid and phenol are commonly used in the clinic to destroy skin lesions with chemical cautery. Due to their caustic and corrosiveness, it is challenging to handle and use them on skin lesions safely. Although they can be applied to the skin with a syringe and plastic fountain pen, they cannot be stored for a long time due to the caustic damage exerted on the plastic and rubber components of the syringe and pen¹. A modified syringe as a cautery pen is a good option for chemical cautery². Glass containers are the best means to store all such chemicals. Hence, a glass injection vial inserted with a wicked polytube is a better option for chemical cautery. In this apparatus, the used rubber-capped glass vials can be cleaned and dried without disturbing the cap seal. Then, the chemical agents are transferred through a syringe from its big container to the vial, which can be stored for a long time as it was used in the past. It also does not have a direct effect on the rubber cap because the chemical contact on the cap in upright positions is not there. Then, a small piece of refill polytube is taken, beveled, and wicked with cotton for proper flow of the chemicals via its capillary action and gravity (Figure 1A-C). After this, one end of the tube is sliced and beveled for easy insertion into the rubber cap of the vial after puncturing the cap with the tip of small scissors, and the external part of the tube is

used as an applicator to destroy the skin lesions. After chemical cautery is completed, we cut a little part of the tube to observe aseptic precautions. The flow of the chemicals is well controlled and smooth through the wicked polytube (Figure 1D, E). The issues of corrosion and the spilling of chemicals from the vial are kept away. Thus, the wicked glass vial is a very good option for routine chemical cautery in the clinic with better safety (Figure 1F).

Conflict of interest: None declared.

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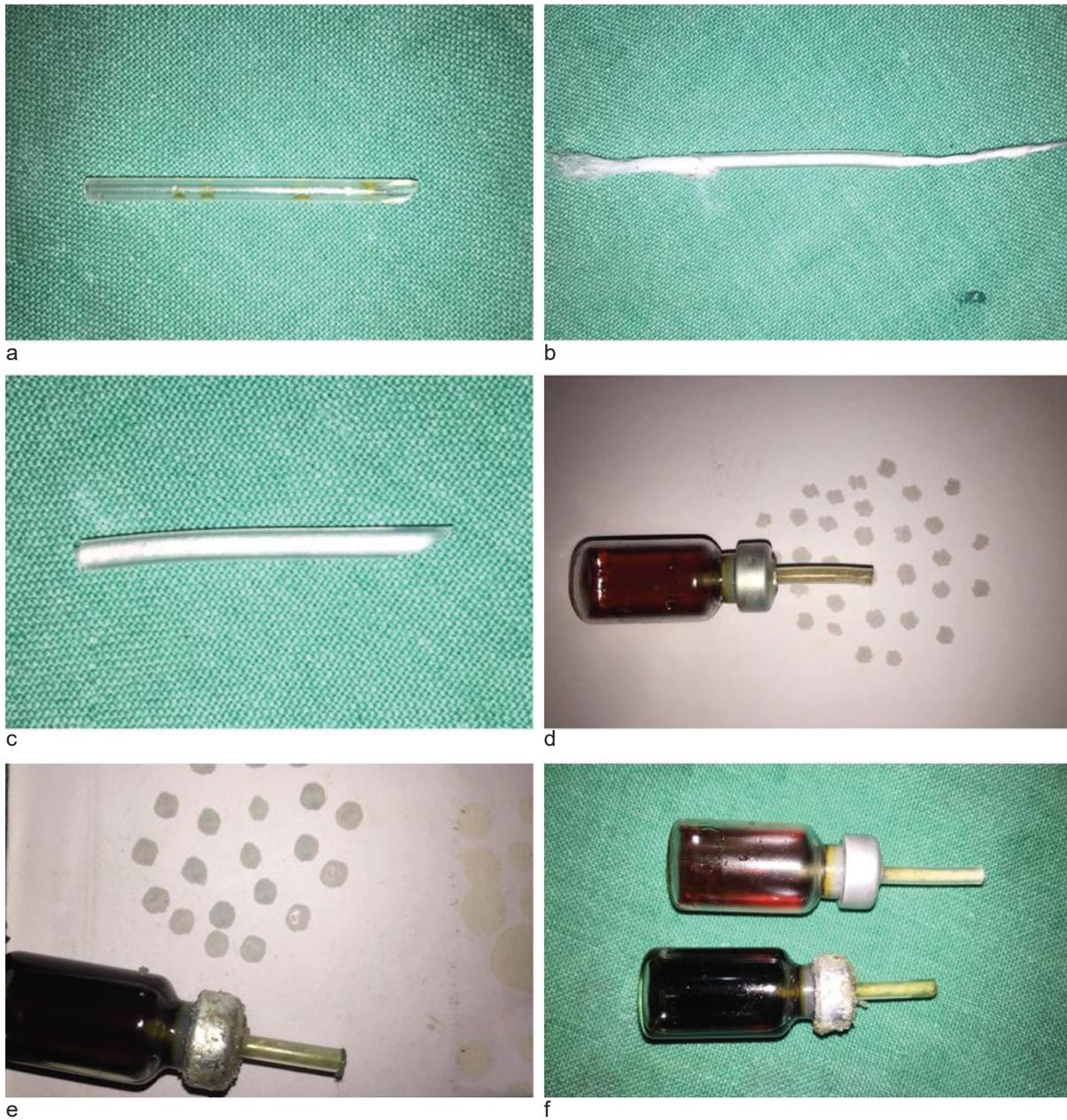


Figure 1. (a-c) A small piece of refill polytube is beveled and wicked with cotton wick. (d, e) The droplets of chemical agents (trichloroacetic acid and phenol) on the thick paper. (f) The chemical vial with wicked polytube for use in the office.