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A Simple, Cost-effective Method of Preventing Laryngoscope Handle Contamination

To the Editor:—A 1993 letter in ANESTHESIOLOGY documenting a high incidence of occult blood on laryngoscope handles[1] prompted our Department to address this source of potential contamination. Commercially prepared disposable products for handle protection did not meet our needs for a number of reasons: (1) available products range in cost from $0.90 to $2.75 per unit; (2) many available products contain latex and, therefore, are not practical in our pediatric patient population because of the high incidence of risk of latex sensitivity; and (3) many commercially available products are difficult to apply.

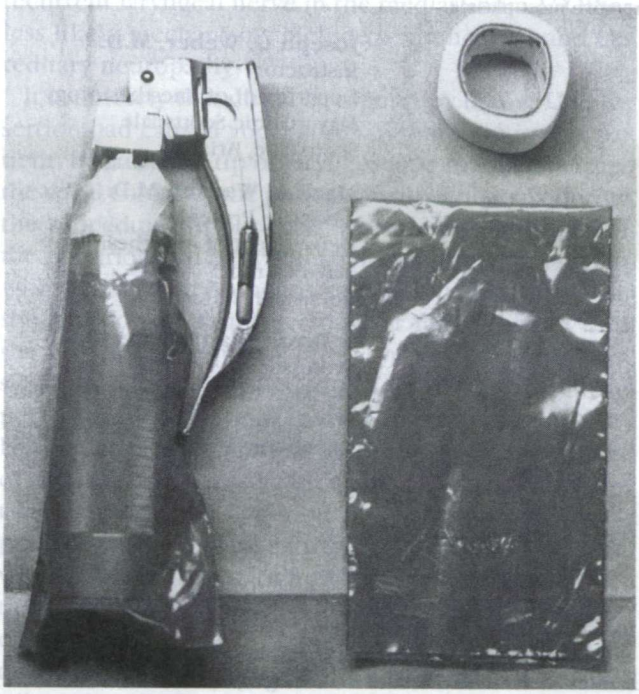

Fig. 1. GEM nonlatex medical bag as supplied and as used for a laryngoscope handle protector.

We have been using a cost-effective method of protecting laryngoscope handles for more than a year. Small plastic bags, available from GEM Medical Industries, Inc. (Palatine, IL) for $0.03 per unit, can be placed over the laryngoscope handle. A piece of tape is used to secure the bag to the handle (fig. 1). Because the bag is manufactured from a supple plastic, the anesthesiologist's ability to securely grip the laryngoscope handle is preserved. At the completion of each case, the laryngoscope blade is sent for sterilization and the used bag removed and disposed of, after which a fresh one is secured in place. This is a cost-effective way to decrease the risk of laryngoscope handle contamination.

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Reference

1. Morell RC, Ririe D, James RL, Crews DA, Huffstetler K: A survey of laryngoscope contamination at a university and a community hospital. ANESTHESIOLOGY 80:960, 1994

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