

Notes on Practical Nursing.

PREPARATION OF OPERATING ROOM SUPPLIES AND THE OPERATING ROOM IN HOSPITALS AND HOMES.

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SPONGES.

There are several varieties of sponges used in an operating room, every surgeon having his preference. The best and most commonly used are made of plain gauze, being most cheaply, easily, and safely sterilized. They can either be made in a single large or small piece, all raw edges being sewn to prevent ravelling of the threads. The sizes will generally be determined by the surgeon. They are also made by folding the gauze from four to sixteen times, making square pads, the edges being sewn together. This sponge, when used in a laparotomy should have a tape attached at one end as a safeguard, to which is clamped an artery forcep, to prevent it from slipping into the abdominal cavity. Sometimes a piece of gauze is cut round, filled with absorbent cotton, and sewn together in the shape of a ball.

All gauze sponges are sterilized, either by steam heat under 15 lbs. pressure, or by boiling in water under cover for at least 20 minutes. When sterilizing sponges by steam heat, sort them in sizes, one dozen in every bunch, fasten them on to a safety pin, and wrap in a towel; this is very important, especially in major operations, as the nurse will then be better able to keep a strict account of them.

Cotton sponges made of absorbent or medicated cotton are very commonly used in gynecological and eye operations. They are made into round even balls twisted at the top differing in size, according to the place operated upon. It is best to form the cotton into sponges before sterilizing the same, but in cases of emergencies, unless s. c. emergency packages are prepared, sterile cotton can be used with equally as good result providing the nurse's hands and receptacles used are properly prepared for the occasion. The cotton sponges are wrapped up in a towel, and sterilized by steam heat. They are very seldom used dry, but are almost always soaked, either in some antiseptic solution or plain sterile water during an operation.

Sea sponges or marine sponges are the ideal sponges, as they are very absorbent, and are easily washed. Perfect sterilization is hard to obtain, so they are often used with suspicion, especially in major operations. In buying sponges select only bleached ones of the finest

grade, and prepare them as follow: Beat them with a mallet after first placing them in a muslin bag, remove and wash them well in running water for about an hour, then place them in a 1 per cent. sol. muriatic acid for eight hours. Taking them from the solution rinse well in sterile water, put them in a sterile soda sol. (1 per cent.) for twelve hours, rinse well in sterile water, and next place them in a 3 per cent. carbolic acid sol., in which they should remain for at least 48 hours before using. All apparatuses used should be surgically clean as well as the nurse's hands. Before using, the sponges should be well rinsed in sterile water and carefully counted.

There are several other methods of preparing sea sponges; in fact, nearly every hospital has its own methods, but the one mentioned has proven very satisfactory to me.

All sponges should be destroyed after an operation.

Sponges needed for a laparotomy are *gauze sponges*; 4 small, 8 medium, and 4 large; or gauze sheets, used by some surgeons, several dozens, as they are not washed, but if they are washed use about one dozen.

If sea sponges are used then a set of one dozen small, or four small, six medium, and four large s. c. elephant ears.

Some surgeons prefer to wash their own sponges, or to have the assistant officiate at the sponge table in connection with his other duties; in such a case only two sponges are used, placed in a bowl of sterile water by the assistant surgeon, the sponge nurse's duty is then only to change the water when necessary.

For all operations on the face and in the mouth sea sponges are preferred.

In all operations on the intestines small pieces of gauze wound round little wooden sticks (such as the butchers use) and securely fastened by strong linen thread should always be at hand, as they are used for mopping out the contents of the intestine when incised.

In case of amputation of a limb an additional sponge should be at hand, consisting of a piece of gauze cut at one end, forming three tails; this is used to retract the muscles when sawing the bone in two. In cases where there is a deep cavity the nurse should have some sponges on sponge holders (called probangs) at hand.

As a rule, for every operation, two sets of sponges should be prepared as unexpected cavities of pus may be found, or fæcal matter comes in contact with the sponges, and prevents them from being used again. In cases where pus is expected in large quantities several sets of sponges should be prepared.

(To be continued.)

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