Tincture benzoin as an antiseptic and adhesive for preoperative surgical preparation

Sir,

Tincture benzoin has been used as an antibiotic for superficial wound infections and has well-established uses in both allopathic and traditional forms of medicine. In the form of a tincture (i.e., a solution in alcohol) benzoin is used as an inhalant with steam for the relief of cough, laryngitis, bronchitis and upper respiratory tract disorders.[1] Several national pharmacopoeias - including the British, Chinese, French, Italian, Japanese, Swiss, Thai and American recommend this drug as a local skin antibiotic solution for the topical treatment of itching skin rashes, wounds and ulcers. Although, tincture benzoin has been used in several surgical specialties, its use as a preoperative surgical preparation, especially in neurosurgery has not been adequately evaluated. The authors observed that tincture benzoin is an efficient and strong local skin antibiotic and could be used effectively prior to surgery. The authors have used tincture benzoin in the preoperative preparation of the skin after completing the regular scrubs for painting for over 15 years. Its
adhesiveness assists in sticking of the operative drapes to the skin.\textsuperscript{[2,3]} The solution appeared to be simple and safe to handle and for application. Its powerful local antibiotic properties appears to be effective in treating a variety of infections including multiple aerobic, anaerobic and spore-forming bacteria were exposed to tincture of benzoin solution, as well as \textit{Candida albicans} and \textit{Mycobacterium fortuitum}.\textsuperscript{[4]} Complications related to its use include contact and allergic dermatitis, however, no complications were encountered by the authors in their patients. The postoperative use of tincture benzoin as an antiseptic for wound preparation should be judicious and one should be very careful while applying benzoin as due to its adhesive properties, it can attract dust particles and other impurities from the surroundings. The solution is significantly cheap in comparison to commercial adhesive drapes which are considerably more expensive and could be a good option, particularly in developing countries.

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