

[54] TONGUE BLADE SUCKER

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[51] Int. Cl. A61b 1/24

[58] Field of Search 128/15, 16; 426/91, 134

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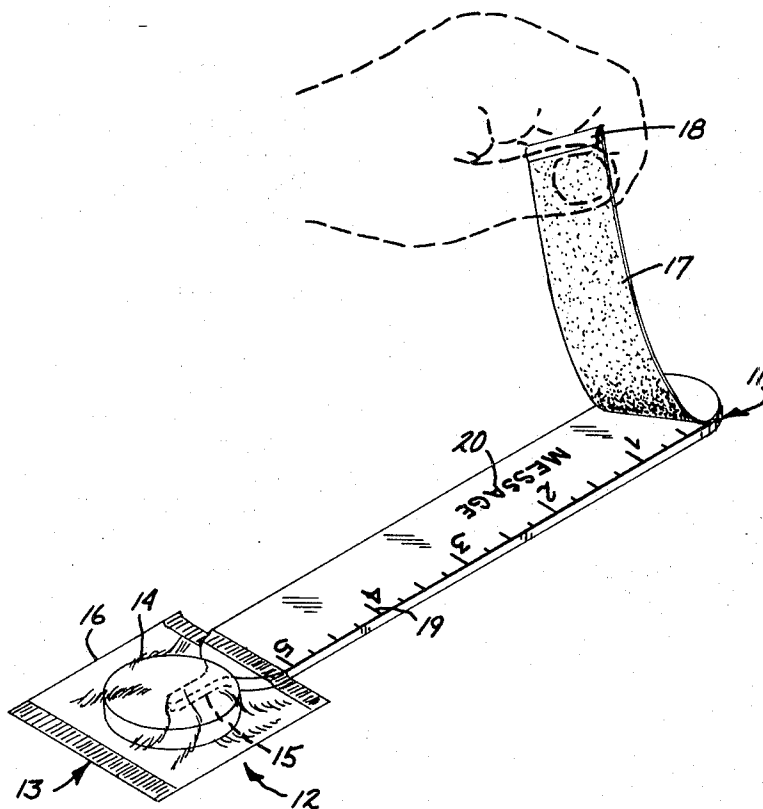
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[57] ABSTRACT

Apparatus for motivating cooperation of youthful patients in oral examinations by intimately associating a reward with the examination procedure and maintaining the reward in the patients field of view throughout the examination. The reward, which may comprise a confection enclosed in a sanitary, transparent, removable wrapper, is mounted on one end of a tongue depressor. The other end is covered by a removable adhesive water proof strip which engages the patient's tongue during the examination, and is subsequently removed to leave the blade as a substantially dry handle for the confection. The blade is graduated along one edge to give it additional permanent value to the patient and a humorous, puzzle, or advertising message may be printed on the blade to be uncovered when the adhesive strip is removed.

8 Claims, 2 Drawing Figures



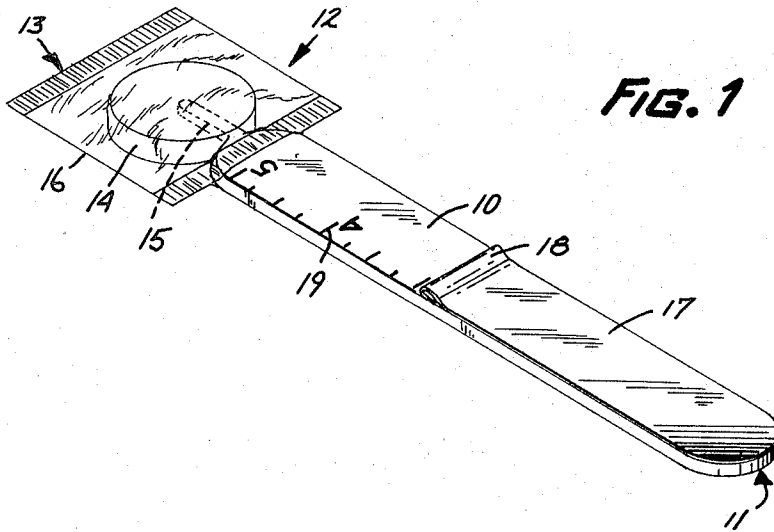
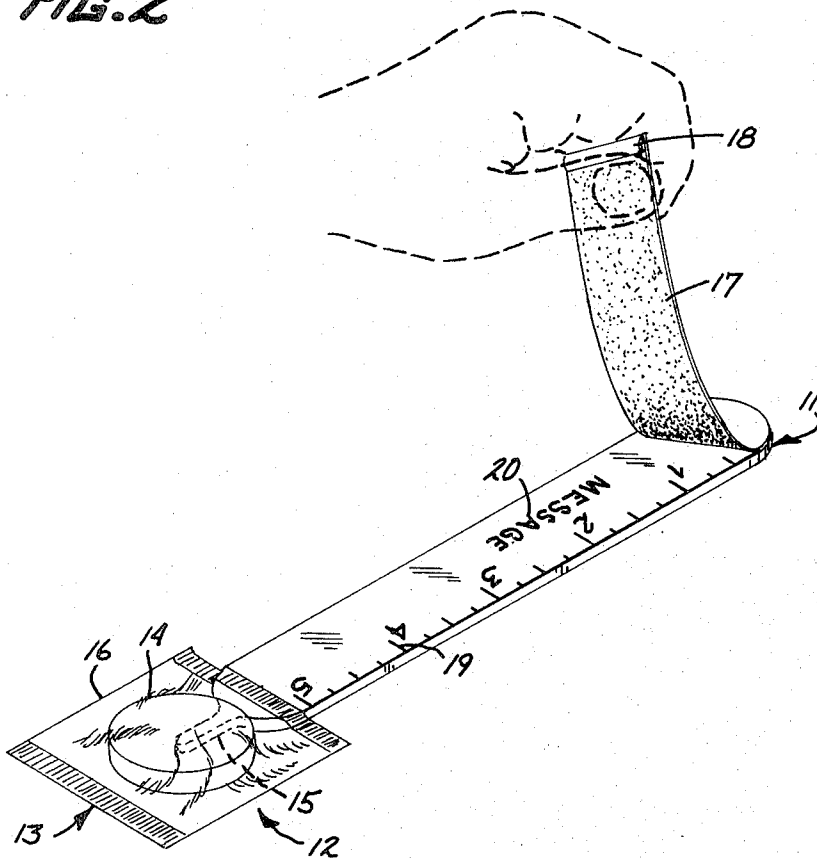


FIG. 2



TONGUE BLADE SUCKER

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to the field of medical apparatus and particularly to tongue depressors for use with youthful patients during oral examinations.

It has become apparent that the recognized difficulty in obtaining the cooperation of a child in an oral examination arises from the child's aversion to the sensation of gagging. The gag reflex is stimulated particularly during the important part of the examination where the posterior portion of the tongue must be depressed.

Cooperation of youthful patients in uncomfortable procedures has often obtained by the proffer of a reward, but with younger patients the prospect of a subsequent reward is often forgotten in the present discomfort.

I am aware that it has been proposed to coat or insert a layer of candy at the end of a tongue depressor, in the hope that the pleasant taste will overcome or reduce the discomfort. While to some extent this may be successful psychologically, it has serious physiological disadvantages. The increased salivation resulting from the presence of the candy is not only annoying by its mere presence to fill the visual field, but may interfere with contemplated medical procedures such as the taking of a throat culture or the incision of a peritonsillar abscess. Moreover, if the confection is colored it may stain the patient's tissues, interfering with the examiner's interpretation of "redness" of the throat and even masking a pathological lesions inside the mouth. The increased dimension of the blade due to the presence of the confection also increases the likelihood of stimulating the gag reflex.

Further disadvantages in using a tongue depressor with a confection coated blade are found in the tendency of a patient to "bite down" as he would with candy in his mouth, in the tendency of the blade to become slippery when wet with saliva and hence less securely manipulated by the examiner, and in the possibility that a portion of the confection may break off to be swallowed or possibly choked on by the patient. Psychologically the disadvantages are also present that the patient is given the reward before the need for cooperation is over, and that the reward is also out of the patient's field of vision and hence relatively not perceptible to sight-minded patients. It is almost obligatory to give the patient the blade with the remaining confection on it for consumption after the oral examination is finished - a very unwise procedure if he is to remain in the examination room for further examination.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention overcomes the disadvantages of the prior art by providing a structure in which a reward element forms an integral part of the examination procedure, remains at all times in the field of vision of the patient, does not stimulate increased salivation or otherwise interfere with the work of the examiner, and may safely be given to the patient as soon as the oral examination is over. This is accomplished by securing the confection or other reward element to the end of the blade which is not inserted in the patient's mouth, and applying a removable waterproof strip to the blade surface where it is to touch the tongue. The confection remains wrapped in a transparent enclosure during the

examination so that the examiner's hand does not touch it, and the adhesive strip is removed after the examination to leave the blade substantially dry as a handle for the confection. One edge of the blade may be graduated to act as a ruler, giving it continued value for somewhat more mature patients, and the blade may carry a humorous, puzzle, or advertising message which is revealed when the adhesive strip is removed.

It is accordingly a principal object of the invention to provide a new and useful pediatric appliance.

Another object of the invention is to provide an improved means for motivating the cooperation of youthful patients in oral examinations.

Another object of the invention is to provide a new and improved tongue depressor.

A more specific object of the invention is to provide such a depressor which carries a reward element at the end not to be inserted in the patient's mouth, to remain in his field of vision during the examination.

A further object of the invention is to provide such a depressor with a removable strip for preventing substantial direct contact between the blade and the patient's tissues.

Various other objects, advantages, and features of novelty which characterize my invention are pointed out with particularity in the claims annexed hereto and forming a part hereof. However, for a better understanding of the invention, its advantages, and objects attained by its use, reference should be had to the drawing which forms a further part hereof, and to the accompanying descriptive matter, in which there is illustrated and described a preferred embodiment of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

In the drawing FIG. 1 is a perspective view of an appliance according to the invention; and

FIG. 2 shows the appliance being prepared, after an oral examination, to be given to the patient.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

In the drawing my appliance is shown to comprise a blade 10, ordinarily of thin wood, having a first end 11 intended for use in depressing the patient's tongue, and a second end 12 intended to remain in the patient's field of vision during the examination and to carry a reward element 13. For purposes of illustration the reward element is shown to comprise a confection 14 carried on a narrow extension 15 of the blade and sealed within a transparent enclosure 16. One surface of end 11 is covered by a removable, waterproof, adhesive strip 17 to provide a surface with which the examiner depresses the patient's tongue: a portion of strip 17 is folded back on itself at 18 to facilitate removal of the strip. One edge of the blade is marked with linear graduations 19 so that the blade may be used as a ruler. A humorous, puzzle, or advertising message 20 may be impressed on the blade so as to be initially covered by strip 17.

Operation

In use the examiner shows the reward element to the patient and promises it will be his after the examination is over. He then proceeds with the examination, applying the surface covered by strip 17 so that only the strip contacts the patient's tongue. In his normal handling of

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the appliance, the reward element remains in the patient's field of vision to continually reinforce the motivation for the patient to cooperate with the examiner. When the examination is completed the examiner grips strip 17 at tab 18 and peels it off the blade, after which the latter may safely be given to the patient. If further examination is contemplated, the patient is simply instructed not to open the confection until he leaves examination room.

Numerous objects and advantages of my invention have been set forth in the foregoing description, together with details of the structure and function of the invention, and the novel features thereof are pointed out in the appended claims. The disclosure, however, is illustrative only, and changes may be made in detail, especially in matters of shape, size, and arrangement of parts, within the principle of the invention, to the full extent indicated by the broad general meaning of the terms in which the appended claims are expressed.

What is claimed is:

1. Apparatus for motivating the cooperation of youthful patients in oral examinations comprising, in combination:

a blade having a first end for manipulating the patient's tongue and a second end for simultaneously retaining the patient's attention;

a waterproof protecting strip removably adhered to the face of the first end of the blade to engage the patient's tongue and prevent it from substantial contact with the blade;

and a reward element carried by the second end of the blade to remain in the patient's field of vision during use of the appliance in an oral examination.

2. Apparatus according to claim 1 in which the reward element is comestible.

3. Apparatus according to claim 2 in which the reward element is enclosed in a transparent wrapping to

prevent contact therewith by the examiner's hand during the examination.

4. Apparatus according to claim 1 in which the blade carries a message beneath the protective strip to be revealed after the examination.

5. Apparatus according to claim 1 in which the blade is impressed with a characteristic making it of value to the patient after the reward element has been removed.

6. Apparatus according to claim 5 in which said characteristic comprises a set of graduations along one edge of the blade to function as a ruler.

7. Apparatus according to claim 2 in which said second end is formed as a narrow tip to receive a confection in lollipop fashion.

8. Apparatus for motivating the cooperation of a youthful patient in an oral examination comprising, in combination;

a blade having a first end for manipulating the patient's tongue, a second end for simultaneously retaining the patient's attention, and a set of graduations for giving the blade permanent value to the patient as a ruler;

a waterproof opaque protection strip removably adhered to the face of the first end of the blade in masking relation to a message on the blade, to engage the patient's tongue during the examination and prevent it from substantial direct contact with the blade;

a comestible reward element secured to the second end of the blade to remain in the patient's field of view during use of the apparatus in an oral examination;

and a transparent wrapper removably enclosing said reward element to prevent contact thereof by the examiner's hand during the examination.

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