Nov. 15, 1955 G. P. HULL 2,723,661

TONGUE DEPRESSOR

Filed May 20, 1954

FIG. 1

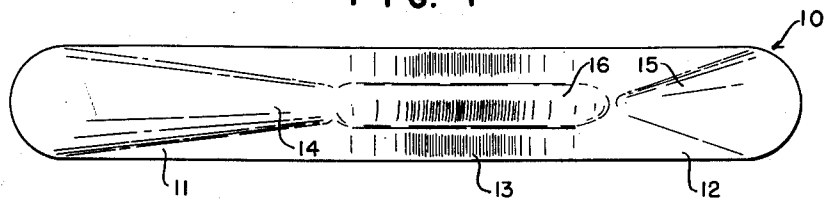


FIG. 2

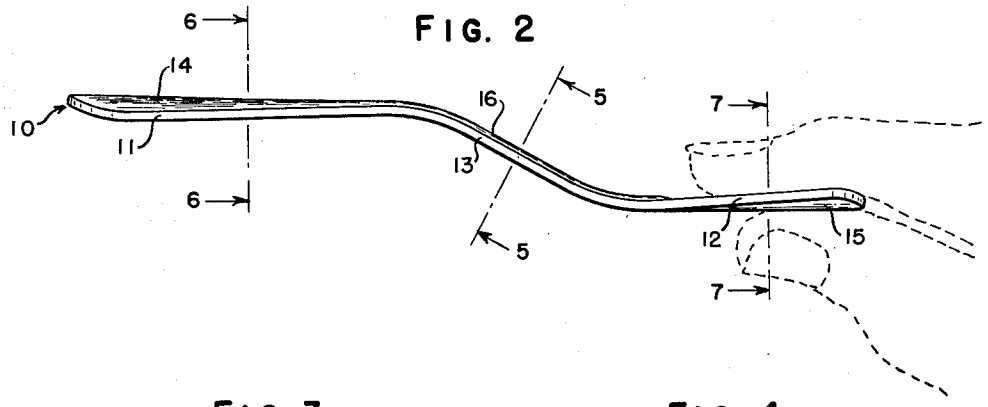


FIG. 3

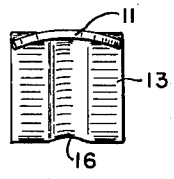


FIG. 4

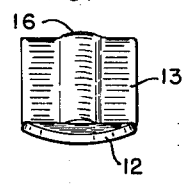


FIG. 5



FIG. 6

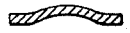
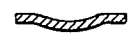


FIG. 7



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United States Patent Office 2,723,661 Patented Nov. 15, 1955

2,723,661

TONGUE DEPRESSOR

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Application May 20, 1954, Serial No. 431,030

2 Claims. (Cl. 128—15)

This invention relates to a disposable hygienic tongue depressor, and more particularly to such a tongue depressor having a handle portion parallel to, but offset from, the blade portion to enable the user to more readily look along the blade.

The principal object of the invention is to provide a tongue depressor for use by physicians and surgeons which has a handle portion in a plane substantially parallel to the blade or tongue-engaging portion, but offset below the plane of the blade portion to afford the user a clear view along the blade portion unobstructed by the fingers which grasp the handle portion.

A further object of the invention is to provide a tongue depressor of the character described that may be made of wood veneer, whereby the tongue depressor may be antiseptically manufactured and packaged at sufficiently low cost to make it economically practicable to throw it away after a single use.

Still further objects are to provide a wood veneer tongue depressor of the character described that is correctly shaped to conform to the structure of the human tongue, that has a handle shaped for convenient gripping and control, and which is provided with a central reinforcing corrugation to give the shaped wood veneer adequate strength and rigidity.

Other objects and advantages will be apparent upon reading the following description, taken in connection with the accompanying drawing, in which:

Figure 1 is a plan view of my improved tongue depressor;

Figure 2 is a side elevation thereof, showing in dotted lines the manner in which it may be grasped in the fingers of the user;

Figure 3 is an end elevational view as viewed from the left in Figure 2;

Figure 4 is an end elevational view as viewed from the right in Figure 2;

Figure 5 is a sectional view on the line 5—5 of Figure 2;

Figure 6 is a sectional view on the line 6—6 of Figure 2;

Figure 7 is a sectional view on the line 7—7 of Figure 2.

The single use tongue depressors of the prior art have usually been flat strips of wood veneer with rounded ends. They have been made by stamping flat blanks from thin sheets of wood veneer and then tumbling the blanks to smooth their surfaces and slightly round their sharp edges. They have been ideal from the standpoints of economy and hygiene, but have been rather inconvenient to use and tend to slip on the tongue. The present invention overcomes these disadvantages by suitably shaping the wood veneer blanks for convenience of handling and avoidance of tongue slipping, but this introduces a problem of strength and rigidity of the finished product, which problem is overcome according to the present invention by the selection of particular curves for the foregoing purposes and by the addition of a central reinforcing corrugation. The shaping of the present invention is accomplished by steaming the flat blanks after tumbling to soften the wood veneer and make it pliable, and then subjecting the heated, moist blanks to pressure between suitable dies. These steps are conventional in forming wood veneer, but have the additional advantage here of producing a thoroughly hygienic product.

Referring now to the drawing, the tongue depressor 10 has a blade portion 11 and a handle portion 12 in substantially parallel relation but offset the one from the other and connected by the diagonally inclined portion 13. Blade 11, handle 12 and inclined portion 13 are of substantially uniform width and thickness. Both blade 11 and handle 12 have ends suitably rounded as shown and are slightly dished transversely in oppositely facing directions as shown at 14 and 15. Blade 11 has its concave portion 14 facing downward and handle 12 is dished with its concave portion 15 facing upward. Blade 11 is preferably slightly longer than handle 12.

The inclined portion 13 has a longitudinally extending central rib 16 whose concavity faces downward as shown to give additional strength and rigidity to the depressor. The central rib 16 extends the entire length of the inclined portion 13 and extends for a short distance along handle 12 at one end and along blade 11 at the other. The inclined portion 13 is reversely curved at each end to join smoothly the blade 11 at one end and the handle 12 at the other, so that there is no sharp bend to lessen the rigidity of the depressor or to form a weak spot therein. Likewise the dished portion or concavity 14 in the handle 11 is tapered from rib 16 to its widest extent at the end of the blade, the maximum depth of the dished portion being at the end of the blade. In this manner the transverse dishing or curving of the depressor is accomplished without undue stress or sharp curves in the wood veneer from which the depressor 10 is made.

The dished portion 15 of the handle 12, which is curved in the opposite direction from rib 16, is also tapered outward from rib 16 to the end of the handle 12. The dishing or transverse curving of handle 12 commences imperceptibly at a little distance from the end of rib 16 and increases toward the end of handle 12, so that here also there is no sharp bending of the wood veneer.

It will be understood that the overall dimensions of the depressor 10 are preferably the same as those of the flat tongue depressors heretofore commonly in use, being of the order of seven-eighths of an inch wide and six inches long. The blank from which depressor 10 is formed, of course, is slightly longer to allow for the offset described above. In practice it has been found that the depressors made from wood veneer according to this invention need be no thicker than about one-sixteenth of an inch, and are then comparable in strength to the commonly used flat depressors, it being understood that the blanks are cut from the wood veneer so that the grain or fibre of the wood runs in the longitudinal direction of the blank.

Handle 12 is substantially in a plane parallel with the plane of blade 11, but offset approximately three-quarters of an inch below. Upon inspection of Figure 2, it will be apparent that, due to this offset, the depressor 10 may be firmly grasped in the fingers of the user and the depressor used in conventional manner but the user may sight along the blade 11, his view being unobstructed by his fingers.

In using the conventional flat-strip depressor, it is well known that the depressor must be inserted in the mouth slightly across the tongue so that the fingers of the user do not interfere with his view but are slightly to one side. This, of course, prevents the use of the depressor along the whole length of the tongue, which, in some instances, is disadvantageous. The depressor 10, with its handle 12

offset below blade **11**, on the other hand, may be used along the full length of the tongue in all instances.

Dished portions **14** and **15** and the rib **16** give additional strength and rigidity to the depressor **10** as described above and the dished portions **14** and **15** serve other useful purposes. It has long been recognized that depressors made of wood veneer, besides being disposable, are superior to depressors made of metal or glass in that they do not slip as easily when placed upon the tongue. The dished portion **14** being curved in conformity with the shape of the tongue, further decreases slippage of the depressor when placed upon the tongue and, also, being curved to fit the shape of the tongue, it is not necessary to depress the tongue so far in order to afford a view of the throat equal to that obtained when using a depressor that is transversely flat.

The dished portion **15** of the handle **12** provides a place for the finger of the user which makes the depressor assume the proper position in the hand of the user and gives the user control of the blade to a degree surprisingly greater than is evident from inspection of the drawings or of the depressor itself.

While there is herein described and in the drawing shown, an illustrative embodiment of the invention, it is to be understood that the invention is not limited thereto, but may comprehend other constructions, arrangements of parts, details and features without departing from the spirit of the invention. I desire to be limited, therefore, only by the scope of the appended claims.

I claim:

1. A tongue depressor comprising a relatively thin and narrow strip of material of substantially uniform width and thickness, the material of said strip being fibrous and having its fibers running in the direction of the length of the strip, said strip having its opposite end portions disposed in offset parallel planes, said end portions being connected by an intermediate portion disposed in a plane inclined to the planes of the end portions, said intermediate portion being reversely curved adjacent its junctures with said end portions and smoothly joined thereto, and said intermediate portion having a central reinforcing rib extending intto each of said end portions.

2. A tongue depressor comprising a relatively thin and narrow strip of wood veneer of substantially uniform width and thickness, said wood veneer having its fibers running in the direction of the length of the strip, said strip having its opposite end portions disposed in offset parallel planes, each end portion being transversely concave with the concavities oppositely facing, said end portions being connected by an intermediate portion disposed in a plane inclined to the planes of said end portions, said intermediate portion being reversely curved adjacent its junctures with said end portions and smoothly joined thereto, and said intermediate portion having a central reinforcing rib extending into each of said end portions.

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