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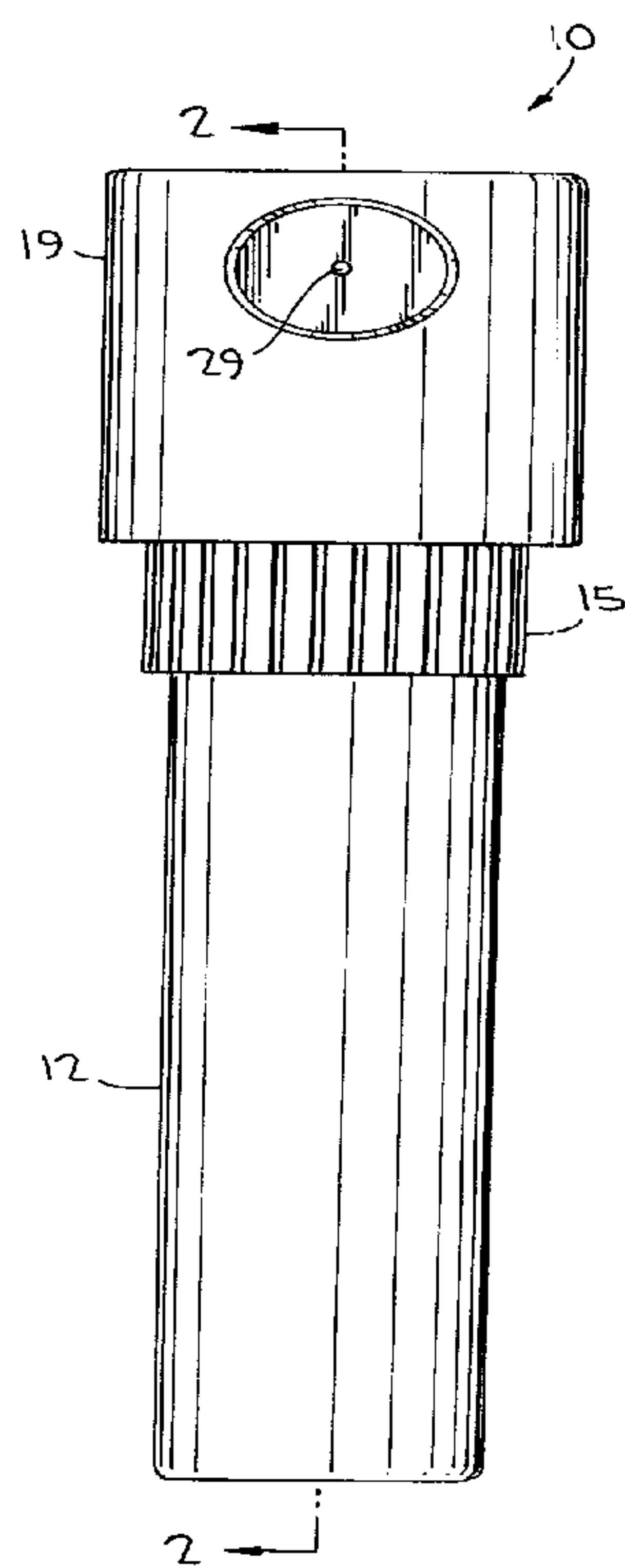
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(54) **POMPE DISTRIBUTRICE MINIATURE**

(54) **MINIATURE PUMP DISPENSER**



(57) A miniature pump sprayer has its pump cylinder mounted within a rigid vial and throttles product during pumping through a resilient disc valve or spring valve. A coaxial rod within a hollow piston plugs into a hollow tube extending toward the rod within the cylinder for valuing the inlet closed during each pressure stroke of the plunger.

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A B S T R A C T

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This invention relates generally to a manually operated pump sprayer of simple design with few moving parts especially adapted for dispensing small amounts of liquid product such as samples and/or concentrates of, for example, perfumes and colognes, from a connected vial of miniature form requiring no vent.

More particularly, the present pump sprayer, a throttle pump of the fingertip operated variety, has a plunger which supports an inlet valve probe which controls the inletting of product into the pump chamber, and a separate discharge valve mounted in the head.

Pump sprayers, exemplified by U.S. Patents, 4,025,046, 4,311,255 and 4,735,347, have a probe or sleeve operated by the plunger for controlling the inlet except that such pumps are of the pressure build-up variety requiring an independent valve sometimes referred to as a poppet valve which closes the inlet during the pressure stroke and which in response to the build up of pressure in the pump chamber, shifts independently of the plunger movement to open the discharge against the force of a return spring. Upon release of finger pressure applied against the head, the poppet valve shifts to close the discharge in response to spring pressure at the commencement of the return stroke of the plunger.

Non pressure build-up pumps are also known as exemplified by U.S. Patents 3,211,346 and 2,788,925, in which a valve stem plugs into the inlet for controlling the product

intake into the chamber during the pressure stroke, and a discharge port in the plunger stem is uncovered during the pressure stroke for opening the discharge.

U.S. Patent 4,046,495 discloses a pump sprayer with its plunger head having an auxiliary stem depending from an axial stem for controlling the inlet from an intake chamber to an auxiliary pressure chamber, and a feathered sleeve valve on an upstanding sleeve engaging the axial stem for controlling the inletting of product to an operating chamber defined between the axial stem and a surrounding depending sleeve having a feathered sleeve valve in engagement with the upstanding sleeve. A discharge chamber is defined between a main cylindrical wall of the pump and the upstanding sleeve.

During each suction stroke, the volumes of the auxiliary pressure chamber and the operating chamber are increased for suctioning product into such chambers, the latter via the upstanding featured sleeve valve. During the pressure strokes, product from these chambers is transmitted to the discharge chamber and to the spray means on the plunger head for discharging product from the sprayer.

The multiple chambers and elements required for this known sprayer renders it complex in structure and operation, and its efficiency is questionable. Moreover, this known pump is incapable of being miniaturized due to the need for upstanding and depending sleeves with feathered sleeve valves.

The pump sprayer according to the invention is mounted on a container, which may in the form of a vial, of liquid product to be dispensed. The sprayer includes a pump cylinder supporting a dip tube extending into the container, and a plunger head is mounted on the cylinder for reciprocation between pressure and suction strokes along the cylinder axis. The plunger head has a pump piston movable together therewith and defines a variable volume pump chamber together with the cylinder. A return spring acting between the cylinder and the plunger head returns the head to its initial at rest position. The plunger head has a discharge passage terminating in a discharge spray means mounted on the head, and a fixed rod depends from the plunger head for valve controlling the inlet to the pump chamber. Discharge valve means controls the discharge passage.

The pump sprayer is characterized in that the pump piston is hollow and defines a single variable volume pump chamber with the pump cylinder, the hollow piston defining a portion of the discharge passage. A hollow fixed tube communicating with the dip tube extends into the pump cylinder from a bottom wall of the cylinder. The fixed rod depending from the plunger head extends solely between opposite ends of the hollow piston and sealingly engages the interior of the tube at an upper end thereof during the pressure strokes for valve controlling the inlet to the pump chamber. And, the discharge valve means comprises a throttle valve fixed solely within the plunger head for reciprocating

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movement together therewith.

With such construction, the number of parts and elements of the pump sprayer is reduced to a minimum, and the pump sprayer is capable of being miniaturized in keeping with the invention.

The single pump chamber contrasts the invention from the 4,046,495 U.S. Patent requiring multiple chambers and feathered sleeve valves for controlling the discharge of product through a discharge valve affixed solely within the plunger head according to the invention. The prior art instead requires discharge valving within both the plunger head and within the cylinder to which the head is mounted.

The discharge throttle valve may comprise an annular deformable disc valve or a resiliently biased axially shiftable ring valve.

The rod or probe fixed to the plunger head may have an irregularly shaped free end defining openings or passages with the hollow tube at or near the end of the suction strokes to ensure inletting of liquid product into the pump chamber.

The pump cylinder may be mounted wholly within the open end of the container to reduce overall size of the pump and vial assembly.

The nozzle cup or insert has a sleeve in engagement with a plug in the head such that the disc valve is mounted on the plug and is retained in place by the insert sleeve. Otherwise, the nozzle insert is mounted about the plug which

has an annular valve seat such that the ring valve extends between the nozzle insert and such seat.

The pump may have a plunger lock-up feature by the provision of at least one internal rib on the plunger head skirt extending in the direction of plunger reciprocation, and a radially extending flange on the cylinder having a groove received by the rib to permit plunger reciprocation, the head being rotatable about its central axis such that the rib engages a portion of the flange for locking the head in an up position against reciprocation.

The container may be ventless and have a rigid cylindrical wall for avoiding container collapse during the plunger suction strokes.

Other objects, advantages and novel features of the invention will become more apparent from the following detailed description of the invention when taken in conjunction with the accompany drawings.

Figure 1 is an elevational view of one embodiment of the pump sprayer according to the invention;

Figure 2 is a longitudinal sectional view taken substantially along the line 2-2 of Figure 1;

Figure 3 is a view similar to Figure 2 showing the plunger at or near the end of the pressure stroke;

Figure 4 is a transverse sectional view taken substantially along the line 4-4 of Figure 2;

Figure 5 is a vertical sectional view at an enlarged scale of a portion of the pump piston and the

concentric probe showing the details at the end thereof;

Figure 6 is a view similar to Figure 1 of another embodiment of a pump sprayer according to the invention;

Figure 7 is a longitudinal sectional view taken substantially along the line 7-7 of Figure 6; and

Figure 8 is an elevational view of the discharge valve.

Turning now to the drawings wherein like reference characters refer to like and corresponding parts throughout the several views, the pump sprayer according to the invention is designated 10 in Figures 1 and 2 as comprising a pump cylinder 11 mounted to a container 12 which may be in the form of a vial containing product to be dispensed. The vial may be of rigid material such as glass or hard plastic.

The pump cylinder may be mounted wholly within the container at the mouth thereof as shown, the cylinder having a laterally extending flange 13 overlying free edge 14 of the container and a depending skirt 15 surrounding the container side wall for fixedly mounting the pump cylinder in place.

The cylinder has a depending dip tube 16 extending toward the bottom of the container, and an upstanding hollow tube 17 in communication with the dip tube. Tube 17 may be constricted at its upper end as at 18.

A plunger head 19 has a depending skirt 21 in engagement with flange 13 for mounting the head on the cylinder. Skirt 21 has inner projections or a continuous annular projection 22 engaging the underside of flange 13,

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and a return spring 23 extends between the underside of the plunger head and the bottom of the pump cylinder for maintaining the head in its position of non-use shown in Figure 2.

The head also has a depending central probe 24 and a concentric hollow piston 25. The piston sealingly engages the inner wall of the pump cylinder and reciprocates therein between pressure and suction strokes along the central axis of the cylinder upon application and release of finger pressure applied to top 26 of the plunger head.

The head is formed with a discharge passage 27 defined in part by the hollow piston and an annular space 28 within the head and terminating in a discharge orifice 29 located in a nozzle cup or insert 31 frictionally mounted within the plunger head. The discharge cup has an outer skirt 32 in tight engagement with cylindrical wall 36 defining space 28, and has an inner cylindrical skirt 33 embracing a laterally extending plug formed integrally with the plunger head. Skirt 33 is notched as at 30 to provide communication between space 28 and orifice 29 via a swirl chamber (not shown) to effect a spray discharge as in the normal manner.

In the Figure 2 embodiment, a discharge throttle valve in the form of an elastomeric annular and deformable disc 35 is seated along its outer edge against inner cylindrical wall 36. The disc engages probe 34 and is immobilized against axial shifting movement by inner skirt 33

which retains the disc valve in place against a shoulder 37 formed on probe 24.

In operation, after pump chamber 38, formed between the piston and cylinder, is primed with liquid, the application of finger pressure to the plunger head shifts the head downwardly when viewed in Figure 2 whereupon probe 24 plugs into tube 17 and sealingly engages therewith for valving the inlet closed. As downward movement of the plunger continues the pressurized product within the chamber is forced through the discharge passage deforming valve 35 away from its seat and out through the discharge orifice in the form of a spray. This type of pumping action is referred to as a throttle pump action as product is simply throttled through the forced open discharge valve rather than relying on a pressure build up in the pump chamber to shift a poppet valve away from the discharge as in the category of pressure build-up sprayers.

Upon release of finger pressure applied to the head, a vacuum is created in the pump chamber during the return stroke as assisted by return spring 23. When the plunger approaches its position shown in Figure 2, product is drawn from the vial up the dip tube and into the pump chamber through the inlet now formed between the constricted lower end of rod 24 and the upper end of hollow tube 17. To ensure free passage of product at or toward the end of the plunger return stroke, end 39 of rod 24 (Fig. 5) may be provided with a plurality of radially spaced projections 41 defining

openings with constricted end 18 of hollow tube 17.

Otherwise, lower end 39 may be of some other irregular shape.

Figure 3 illustrates the condition of the plunger at or near the end of the plunger downstroke with probe 24 plugged into tube 17 for valving the inlet closed.

The plunger head may be locked in place in its up position, shown in Figure 2 by the provision of one or more ribs 42 provided on the inner surface of skirt 21 of the plunger head (Fig. 4) and extending in the direction of plunger reciprocation. Flange 13 of the pump cylinder has a like number of grooves 43 extending in the same direction which, when aligned with ribs 42 upon rotation of the plunger head about its central axis, permits plunger reciprocation during a condition of use. To lock the plunger in its up position of Figure 2, the plunger head is simply rotated about its central axis such that the ribs are out of alignment with the grooves and the lower end 44 (Fig. 3) of the ribs abut against the upper surface of flange 13. Indicia of some sort may be provided on the head to assist the user in orienting the ribs to match the grooves to facilitate plunger reciprocation.

A sprayer generally designated 45 is shown in Figures 6, 7 and 8 according to another embodiment of the invention which is similar to sprayer 10 of Figs. 1 to 5 except for the discharge valving.

Here, a discharge cup or insert 46 is fixedly mounted within the plunger head about transversely extending

plug 47 having a conical valve seat 48 formed thereon. A discharge valve 49 shown in detail in Fig. 8, having a valve ring 50 and an integral coil spring 51 extends between the inner wall of cup 46 and valve seat 48. The discharge valve ring has a complimentary inner conical wall 52 which in the at rest position of Figure 7 sealingly engages valve seat 48.

The operation of the sprayer 45 is essentially the same as that described with reference to Figure 2 except that during each pressure stroke the discharge valve simply compresses under the action of its integral spring such that wall 52 is moved by the liquid pump pressure away from its valve seat for opening the discharge to facilitate spraying through orifice 29.

In both embodiments sprayers 10 and 45 do not provide for container venting. The sprayers are miniaturized such that in actual size the vial may be less than one half inch in diameter and the overall height of the vial plus the sprayer structure may be less than two and half inches. The sprayer assembly of the invention may thus be used as a sampler capable of containing products such as perfume or cologne in such small volume as to be emptied after but a few strokes. Hence, there is no need for container venting. Besides, the vial may be of rigid plastic or glass which prevents container collapse during dispensing.

Many modifications and variations of the present invention are made possible in the light of the above teachings. It is therefore to be understood that within the

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scope of the appended claims the invention may be practiced otherwise than as specifically described.

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The embodiments of the invention in which an exclusive property or privilege is claimed are defined as follows:

1. A pump sprayer mounted on a container of liquid to be dispensed, comprising, a pump cylinder supporting a dip tube extending into said container, a plunger head mounted on said cylinder for reciprocation between pressure and suction strokes along a central axis of said cylinder, said plunger head having a pump piston movable together with said head and defining a variable volume pump chamber together with said cylinder, spring return means acting between said cylinder and said plunger head, said plunger head having a discharge passage terminating in a discharge spray means mounted on said head, a fixed rod depending from said plunger head for valve controlling the inlet to said chamber, and discharge valve means for controlling the discharge passage, characterized in that said pump piston is hollow and defines said variable volume pump chamber as a single variable volume pump chamber with said cylinder, said hollow piston defining said discharge passage, a hollow fixed tube communicating with the dip tube extends into said cylinder from a bottom wall of the cylinder, said fixed rod extending solely between opposite ends of said hollow piston and sealingly engaging the interior of said hollow fixed tube at an upper end thereof during said pressure strokes for valve controlling the inlet to said chamber, and said discharge valve means comprising a throttle valve affixed solely within said head for reciprocating movement together therewith.

2. The sprayer according to Claim 1, wherein said discharge valve means comprises an annular deformable disc valve located in the path of said discharge passage.
3. The sprayer according to Claim 1, wherein said discharge valve means comprises an annular resiliently biased axially shiftable ring valve located in the path of said discharge passage.
4. The sprayer according to Claim 1, characterized in that said rod has an irregularly shaped free end defining a plurality of openings with said hollow tube at the end of said suction strokes to ensure inletting of liquid product into said chamber.
5. The sprayer according to Claim 2, wherein said discharge spray means includes a nozzle plug on said head and a nozzle insert having a sleeve in engagement with said plug, characterized in that said disc valve is mounted on said plug and is retained in place by said insert sleeve.
6. The sprayer according to Claim 3, characterized in that said discharge spray means includes a nozzle plug on said head and a nozzle insert mounted on said head about said plug, said plug having an annular valve seat, and said ring valve extending between said nozzle insert and said valve seat.

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7. The sprayer according to claim 1, characterized in that said pump cylinder has a radially extending flange containing at least one groove extending in the direction of plunger reciprocation, said plunger head having a skirt containing at least one inner rib parallel to said groove, said rib engaging said groove to permit plunger reciprocation, and said head being rotatable about the central axis thereof until said rib engages a portion of said flange for locking said head against reciprocation.

