United States Patent

[11] 3,613,899

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[54] **APPARATUS FACILITATING THE COUNTING AND DISPOSAL OF SURGICAL SPONGES**
1 Claim, 6 Drawing Figs.

[52] **U.S. Cl.** **211/133,** 206/72
[51] **Int. Cl.** **A47f 3/14**
[50] **Field of Search** 211/133, 49, 126, 50; 53/390; 206/72

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ABSTRACT: Apparatus for use in an operating room to facilitate the counting and disposal of surgical sponges includes an upright frame member for supporting a bag in vertical open position and one or more stackable sponge-holding trays on top of the frame and bag.

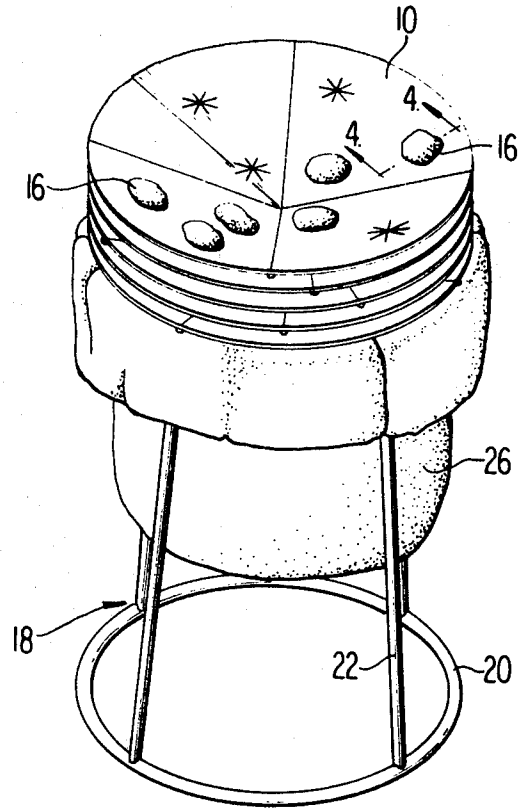


FIG. 1

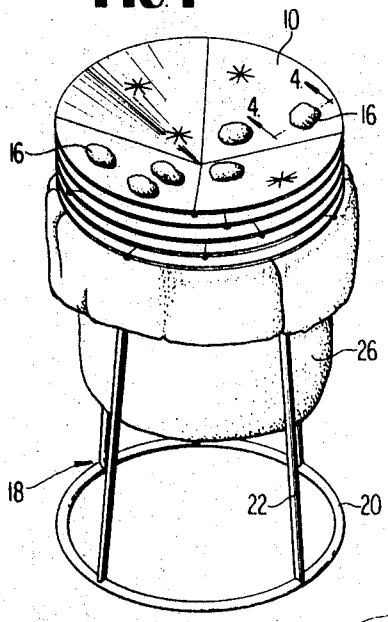


FIG. 2

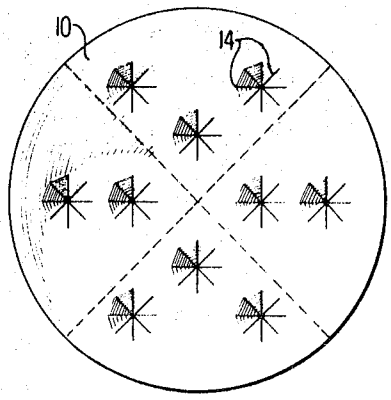


FIG. 3

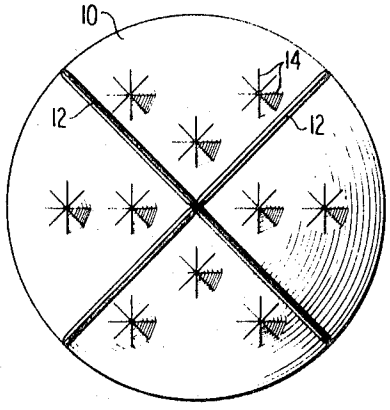


FIG. 5

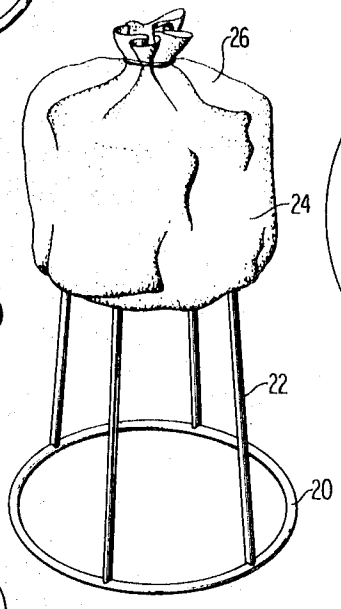
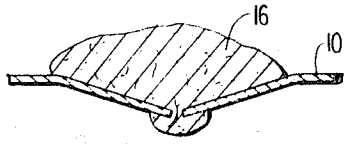


FIG. 4



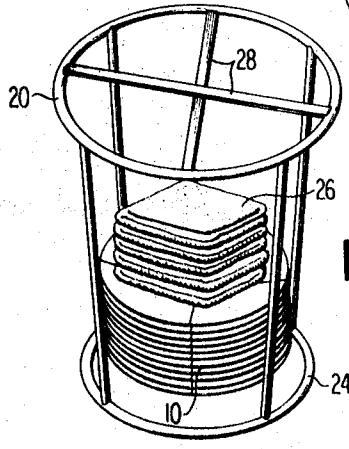


FIG. 6

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APPARATUS FACILITATING THE COUNTING AND DISPOSAL OF SURGICAL SPONGES

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Although there are several systems now in use for the handling of sponges in operating rooms, the most commonly used procedure for counting and disposal is generally as follows:

1. The surgeon grips the used sponge with sponge forceps and hands both the instrument and the sponge to a scrub nurse.
2. The scrub nurse disengages the sponge forceps and drops the used sponge into a kick bucket which is a bucket supported at about floor level on a wheeled dolly.
3. As the surgical procedure progresses, the circulating nurse picks the sponges from the kick bucket and arranges them on a surgical drape in groups of 10 to facilitate the count. In most instances the drape is simply laid on the floor. The number of times that the scrub nurse must go to the kick bucket and retrieve sponges and place them on the drape for counting can amount to 20 or 30 such trips during the course of a single operation.
4. After the final count is taken and before the surgeon closes the incision, the sponges must be handled again by placing them into a plastic bag for removal from the operating room.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The apparatus provides at a convenient working height above the operating room floor, a support which holds a disposable bag in vertical open-mouthed position and one or more stackable, disposable trays formed of sheet material and having at a plurality of points thereon a pattern of a number of slits intersecting at a common point to support at each such location a used sponge.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. **1** is a perspective view showing a preferred embodiment of the present invention with all of the components in assembled relation as they would be used in the operating room;

FIG. **2** is a top plan view of one of the tray members;

FIG. **3** is a bottom plan view of one of the tray members;

FIG. **4** is a section on the line **4—4** of FIG. **1**;

FIG. **5** is a view similar to FIG. **1** showing the disposable bag gathered about and enclosing the disposable trays; and

FIG. **6** shows the components as they would be shipped prior to use.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

As shown most clearly in FIGS. **1**, **2** and **3**, the disposable sponge-supporting trays **10** are formed of sheet material and slightly conical in shape. A plurality of ribs **12** arranged on the convex surface serve as stiffening members and also spacers to facilitate stacking of the trays, once the used sponges have been secured thereon. Each tray includes at a plurality of locations, preferably 10 in number, a sponge-gripping and holding device which is merely a plurality of slits **14** which intersect at a common point. These slits extend completely through the tray as shown most clearly in FIG. **4** and facilitate the locating and holding of a used sponge **16** thereon. The number of these locations on each tray has been chosen as 10 because that is the generally accepted manner of counting sponges, that is, in lots of **10**. This will obviously facilitate the sponge count because one need only count the number of full trays and multiply by 10 and then add the remaining count on the uppermost tray.

In order to support the trays at a convenient working height and also to facilitate their disposal following the final sponge count, an open work stand **18** is provided having a floor-engaging circular base **20**, vertically extending legs **22** and an upper circular support top **24**. This stand supports a disposable bag **26** in vertical open-mouthed condition as shown in FIG. **1** with the upper portion of the bag folded over the top **24** and extending downwardly toward the base. With this arrangement, and once the final sponge count has been made, it is a simple matter to simply close the bag around the assembled stack of trays and the entire parcel is then in condition for easy transport and disposal.

Another advantage of the apparatus of this invention is that in some instances the surgeon will call for a blood weight check. With this arrangement, a nurse need merely lift the disposable bag, weigh the bag and the contents, and then deduct the known weights of the bag, the trays, and the sponges. The fact that any dripping is caught by the bag insures the accuracy of a blood weight check.

As shown in FIG. **6**, the fact that the stand is tapered permits the trays **10** to be sized so that the stand can serve as a container for the trays and bags for shipping purposes. The crossed arms **28** are merely inserted during shipping to hold the trays and bags in the rack.

While a preferred embodiment of the apparatus of this invention has been herein shown and described, applicants claim the benefit of a full range of equivalents within the scope of the appended claims.

We claim:

1. Apparatus to facilitate the handling, counting and disposal of surgical sponges in an operating room comprising:

a stand having a floor-engaging portion and an upper portion for supporting a disposable bag in open vertical position;

a bag supported on said stand in said position; and

disposable tray means dimensioned to be supported on the upper portion of said stand over said bag, said tray means having at a plurality of locations a series of slits intersecting at a common point to enable a used sponge to be gripped and supported at each of said locations, said tray means having a plurality of ribs on the lower surface thereof to facilitate stacking when all of said openings are filled with sponges; whereby following the final sponge count, said bag is folded upwardly around said sponge-filled tray means and disposed of.