This is an author produced version of a paper published in:
Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery

Cronfa URL for this paper:
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Paper:
http://dx.doi.org/10.1097/01.prs.0000300220.93019.28

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tion demonstrated lymph flow across the previous ob-
struction site along the reconstructed route, which may
result from both the reconstructed lymphatic pathway
and the flap transplantation. This preliminary report
suggests that this operative intervention might be a
viable option in the treatment of obstructive lymphed-
ema.
DOI: 10.1097/01.prs.0000300216.00324.9e

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1981.

Biobrane is a biosynthetic wound dressing first
developed by Woodruff in 1979. It has many of the
“ideal” properties highlighted by Pruitt and Levine in
1984.1 There is a great deal of literature available
outlining the successful use of Biobrane in the man-
agement of partial-thickness burns in pediatric pa-
tients. There is also evidence for its use in the treat-
ment of partial- and full-thickness burns in the adult,
particularly in large burns and those involving joints
and the hand. Various application modifications
have been published to overcome coverage of diffi-
cult areas (e.g., use of the Biobrane glove to dress the
foot and the Biobrane “jacket” to dress the torso). In
addition to covering the burn wound, it is also used
in the management of split-thickness skin graft donor
sites, in both burned and nonburned patients. Its use
in stenting split-thickness skin grafts has also been
advocated.

The use of Biobrane has been reported to cover the
axillary defect following surgical excision for hidrade-
nitis suppurativa.2 This single-stage procedure, with no
donor-site morbidity, exhibited the ability to use Bio-
brane in colonized tissues. The limitations included a
longer healing time and increased cost of dressing.

Biobrane has also been used successfully after laser
resurfacing of the face.3 It was well tolerated, minimized
pain and drainage, decreased erythema, reduced heal-
ing time, and simplified nursing care. Similarly, Bio-
brane has been used as a dressing after mechanical
dermabrasion. This study showed that Biobrane re-
duced erythema and healing time by up to 50 percent
when compared with air-exposed wounds.

The use of Biobrane has been reported in the suc-
cessful treatment of serious skin conditions, such as
toxic epidermal necrolysis4 and paraneoplastic pem-
phigus. Biobrane was applied to the extensive areas of
erosion to assist in pain management and to provide a
temporary barrier function. The treatment of serious
skin conditions such as toxic epidermal necrolysis and
pemphigus with Biobrane is an area that warrants fur-
ther evaluation, as it may contribute to the overall treat-
ment and comfort of these patients. Chronic wounds
such as large venous ulcers have also been managed
successfully using Biobrane.

There are several case reports concerning the use of
Biobrane in the contemporary literature. The skin sub-
stitute was used in the treatment of a life-threatening
esophageal fistula by covering an expandable metallic
sten t and in the management of subcutaneous colos-
tomy perforation. Biobrane has also been used in the
successful management of sternotomy wounds that
were not closed immediately due to massive intraop-
erative edema formation.

Adverse affects following the use of Biobrane are
uncommon, but surgeons should be aware of the pos-
sibility of contact dermatitis, hypersensitivity, and hy-
pertrophic scarring.5

We believe that Biobrane is a highly versatile tool that
should be in the armamentarium of all reconstructive
and burns surgeons. Further randomized controlled

Biobrane: A Versatile Tool in the
Armamentarium of the Reconstructive and
Burns Surgeon

Sir:

Biobrane is becoming increasingly popular in the
management of superficial and moderate-depth
partial-thickness burns. When used appropriately, it has
been shown to reduce pain levels, healing time, inpa-
tient stay, and nursing requirements when compared
with traditional dressings. We would like to draw the
attention of the reconstructive community to the ver-
satility of Biobrane above and beyond these well-known
indications.
trials assessing its use in a variety of conditions are warranted.
DOI: 10.1097/01.prs.0000300220.93019.28

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DISCLOSURE
None of the authors has a financial interest in any of the products, devices, or drugs mentioned in this communication.

REFERENCES

The Role of Travel Guides in the Prevention of Skin Cancer

Sir:
The association between skin cancer and sun exposure is well documented, yet despite this, sunbathing remains popular.1 Sun protection advice for travelers could reduce their risk of ultraviolet skin damage and development of skin cancer. We examined the sun protection recommendations in five travel guides to Spain.

Specific sun protection information with respect to “time of day; sun creams; duration of exposure; anatomical sites; clothing; high-risk activities; [and] sunglasses and sun exposure in children” was looked for in the following guides: Lonely Planet 2003, Insight Guides 2004, The AA KEY Guide 2004, The Green Guide 2004, and Fodor’s 2005 (Table 1).

Ultraviolet light has direct mutagenic effects and is associated with an increased risk of skin cancers. Melanoma incidence is rising in the United Kingdom, and two-thirds of all cases can be attributed to sun exposure.2 Prevention by improving public awareness of the risks of sun exposure is essential. An Australian campaign of public education focusing on the use of protective clothing and suncreams3,4 resulted in a slower rise in melanoma incidence, and new cases were histologically thinner.

The strongest ultraviolet rays are between 2 hours before and 2 hours after solar noon, regardless of cloud cover. During this part of the day, sun block should be applied regularly and not just on “hot days,” as recommended by guide B. Factor 15 is the minimum sun protection factor that should be used, but this was only recommended by guide E. Regular reapplication is necessary under routine circumstances but is essential for high-risk activities, where minimal clothing is frequently worn and the sun block is rubbed off, points on which none of the guides commented. That special care should be taken with exposed anatomical sites was not mentioned by any of the guides. The head and neck region, where melanoma is more common, has a prognosis compared with other sites, and yet only hats were recommended by guides C, D, and E. The composition of fabric and whether it is dry or wet is a significant factor in the sun protection afforded by regular clothing. Clothing designed to protect from ultraviolet rays is now available,5 but they were not recommended by any of the guides. The risks of poor sunglasses that dilate the pupil and yet do not provide protection from ultraviolet A and B light were not highlighted. Sunglasses were recommended by guide C, but not the most beneficial wraparound style. Children are generally unaware of the risks of sunburn and few adults will know that a blistering sunburn before the age of 10 years is associated with an increased risk of melanoma in later life.6 Sun protection factor 30+ sun creams and protective clothing are essential for children. Only guide E mentioned children, and this was in the context of poor advice.

Travel guide readers are a group of individuals who are at high risk of being sunburned. The guides could help raise public awareness of skin cancer by including a comprehensive section devoted to the dangers of ultraviolet exposure and methods of sun protection.
DOI: 10.1097/01.prs.0000300217.10557.47