

SUGAR AS AN AID TO WOUND HEALING AND THE TREATMENT OF ULCERS IN LEPROSY

Sir,

In the 7 December 1985 issue of *The Pharmaceutical Journal*, Drs Middleton and Seal, writing from the Departments of Pharmacy and Microbiology at Northwick Park Hospital, Watford

Road, Harrow, Middlesex, HA1 3UJ, England, describe the use of sugar paste in the treatment of abscess cavities and pressure sores with good results. The formula they use for sugar paste is as follows:

	Thin	Thick
Castor sugar	1200 g	1200 g
Icing sugar (additive free)	1800 g	1800 g
Polyethylene glycol 400	1416 ml	686 ml
Hydrogen peroxide 30%	23.1 ml	19.0 ml

The consistency of thin honey is suitable for installation via a syringe and fine plastic tubing into abscess cavities and small openings.

One of our nursing sisters encountered the above article recently and developed a thick paste composed of simple white sugar and 'Betadine' (providone-iodine 10% in a water-miscible base; UK cost is £1.85 for 80 g). This avoids the use of polyethylene glycol 400 in the above formulation, which unfortunately costs UK £62.00 per litre. Our paste has been tried out on leprosy patients with ulcers in our programmes in KwaZulu, Swaziland and Ciskei, and the results so far are extremely encouraging. Where there is no underlying bone or tissue damage, the healing period for ulcers has been reduced from 6 to 3 months. Patients can apply the ointment daily, which has helped to improve many patients' attitudes in self-care. We have also had an outstandingly good result in one seriously ill patient who developed ulcers on buttocks and thighs following septicaemia.

In view of the high cost and frequent difficulty of obtaining plaster of Paris and other materials for the treatment of ulcers in leprosy, we consider that the above approach merits serious consideration and further trial. We record these preliminary impressions and look forward to hearing from readers of *Leprosy Review* who have to care for large numbers of patients with ulcers and who may be encouraged to try this inexpensive method of treatment. We would be happy to supply a sample of this paste on request.

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