Modified bistoury for necropsy work

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The morbid anatomist is the only member of the medical profession who now uses or is likely to use the bistoury[1] to any significant extent; to judge from personal observation, even amongst morbid anatomists its use is hardly widespread. Despite some deficiencies, it can do almost everything that the scalpel can, and more safely, while for certain procedures such as laying open the floor of the pelvis, separating the carotid sheaths from the vertebral bodies, severing the diaphragmatic attachments and opening the heart, it offers advantages over any other instrument.

The standard instrument, while no doubt suitable for the surgical procedures of the past, is somewhat short for the larger-scale operations of the morbid anatomist. Partly for this reason, and partly because of the uninterrupted smoothness of the handle, there is a tendency for the blade to rotate or veer off course. These shortcomings can be remedied completely by a lengthening of the instrument and a modification of the handle to give a firmer 'grip'.

A bistoury incorporating such modifications has been manufactured for this department by Messrs. Alfred Cox (Surgical) Ltd., Coulsdon, Surrey. As shown in the figure, the instrument is slightly longer than the standard type and has three indentations or finger rests on the handle, changes which make for greatly increased stability in use. A further incidental but most worthwhile modification is the addition of flutes to the proximal end. These prevent the bistoury's lying completely flat, so that even a thickly gloved hand can lift it from a wet slab first time every time.

[1]The derivation of the term is obscure. I have so far found only one suggestion, namely, that the instrument was first (or most successfully) manufactured in Pistoja, formerly Pistoria.

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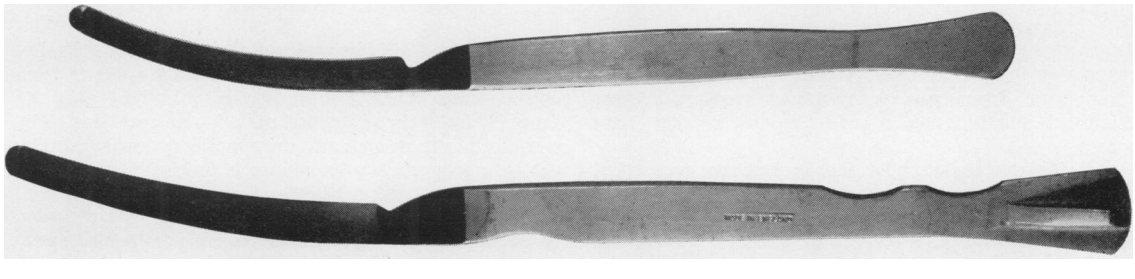
FIG. 1. *The modified bistoury.*



Modified procedure for pyocine typing

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The bacteriocine typing techniques require a preliminary inoculation of the organism to be tested. This is usually performed by streaking a charged loop on to the surface of the culture medium. The resulting growth is then removed from the surface of the medium by scraping it off by means of a glass slide, special scraper, or some other similar device. This procedure, however, is not very satisfactory; it is messy and very often leads to damage of the agar surface, particularly so if the colonies are tenacious or mucoid. It was found that the procedure of removing the growth after incubation can be greatly facilitated by streaking the primary inoculum on to a sterile strip of cellulose acetate placed on the surface of the culture medium. After the incubation period, the cellulose acetate strip, together with the growth of the organism, is simply lifted off the surface of the medium and discarded. The cellulose acetate strips are as long as the diameter of the plate, and approximately ½ in. wide. A number of these strips can be autoclaved and stored ready for use in a suitable container, *e.g.*, between filter paper discs in a Petri dish. The inoculum is streaked along the centre of the strip so that generous margins are left on both sides of the inoculum. The rest of the typing procedure, *i.e.*, exposure to chloroform vapour and streaking of the indicator strains at right angles, follows the technique recommended for the given type of the organism.

Using the procedure described above, pyocine typing was carried out for three months, in parallel with the orthodox 'scraping off' method (Wahba, 1963). The results obtained were absolutely identical, proving that the pyocins diffuse through cellulose acetate without any difficulty, and were not absorbed on the material.

This minor modification simplifies the typing procedure considerably and in our laboratory has given for the past year reliable and completely satisfactory results. The elimination of the 'scraping' procedure has proved a definite practical advantage.

REFERENCE

Wahba, A. H. (1963). *J. Hyg (Lond.)*, **61**, 431.

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