Consider a Mucosal Block to Numb Lips Quickly

BY CAROLYN SACHS Contributing Writer

MAUI, HAWAII — An upper and lower lip mucosal block provides fast, easy, and effective regional anesthesia for lip procedures, Dr. Howard K. Steinman said at the annual Hawaii Dermatology Seminar sponsored by Skin Disease Education Foundation.

“Learn this mucosal block,” he urged. “It has revolutionized my practice more than any other simple technique I have learned in the last 5 years.”

“When patients come to your office, they’re secretly praying that what you’re going to do is going to be painless,” Dr. Steinman, a dermatologic surgery director in San Diego, remarked.

“When you get patients ready for what they expect, painless, reassuring experience, and they’re unhappy,” he explained, “everyone in the room is unhappy.” Using the mucosal block greatly improves the satisfaction of patients. Equipment required for the mucosal block procedure is simple and modestly priced.

“You don’t need a multithousand-dollar energy device,” Dr. Steinman said.

The supplies needed include topical anesthetic (such as Hurricane gel), dental needles, lidocaine Carpules, and a Carpule syringe. Dental syringes, which can be purchased from dental supply companies, are “incredibly” inexpensive, he noted.

The anesthesia requires nothing that is not already in the office, including anesthetic gel and “lots and lots of Q tips,” he explained.

If there’s going to be a lot of dental gel in a patient’s mouth during a cosmetic procedure, be sure to have some bottled water available, since dry mouths make people really don’t like the taste of it.

Injected anesthetics that can be used to perform the mucosal block include lidocaine, bupivacaine, meperidine, and others.

Dr. Steinman outlined the procedure for performing the upper and lower lip mucosal block. “What you’re blocking is the infraorbital nerve,” he explained.

The first step in the procedure is to apply topical anesthetic. Then, at the gingival-buccal sulcus, just lateral to the apex of

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Canine tooth, inject a small amount of anesthetic approximately 0.5 cm upward along the maxilla. The next step is to inject from this point medially—in the potential space between the mucosa and the perioral—from the sulcus to the frenulum. The procedure should be repeated on the contralateral side. Inject a small amount of the solution from the sulcus to the frenulum toward the anterior nasal spine, he added.

But the patient’s lower lip, injection mucosally in the sulcus from the point below the oral commissure to the contralateral side.

Since the nerve block does not reach the corners of the mouth, it is necessary to apply topical anesthetic on the mucosal surface of the muccosal sulcus and then inject a small amount of anesthetic to anesthetize the corners of the mouth. These injections are typically a total of about 15 seconds, Dr. Steinman noted.

It is also important to keep in mind that facial blocks do not impair any vasconstrictor, so consider injecting locally for procedures that result in bleeding, he added.

Dr. Steinman emphasized that the mucosal block works fast.

“This block will numb someone’s lip in approximately 10-15 seconds,” he said.

“As a matter of fact, when I’m doing it, the side I’m numb will usually be large enough by the time I get to the other side of the mouth,” he said.

“So it’s very effective for lip procedures, very effective for fillers especially,” he said. “As we say in Southern California,” he concluded, “this block rocks.”

Dr. Steinman said he had no relevant conflicts of interest.

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