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Swimming by Laryngectomees

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AT first sight, swimming would appear to be a wholly unsuitable and indeed dangerous activity for the laryngectomized patient who constantly fears accidental inundation of the tracheal stoma in the bathroom and elsewhere. In recent years, however, various 'swimming aids' developed in different countries have proved effective, safe and reliable.

These 'swimming aids' consist essentially of an extension tube which plugs firmly and securely into the tracheal stoma, forming a water-tight seal with an inflatable balloon cuff, and which allows respiratory exchange to take place well clear of the surface of the water. Two alternative arrangements are found:

1. The extension tube projects high above the water (as a 'Snorkel tube') and has a floating ball-valve at its outer end to exclude ingress of water (Fig. 1).

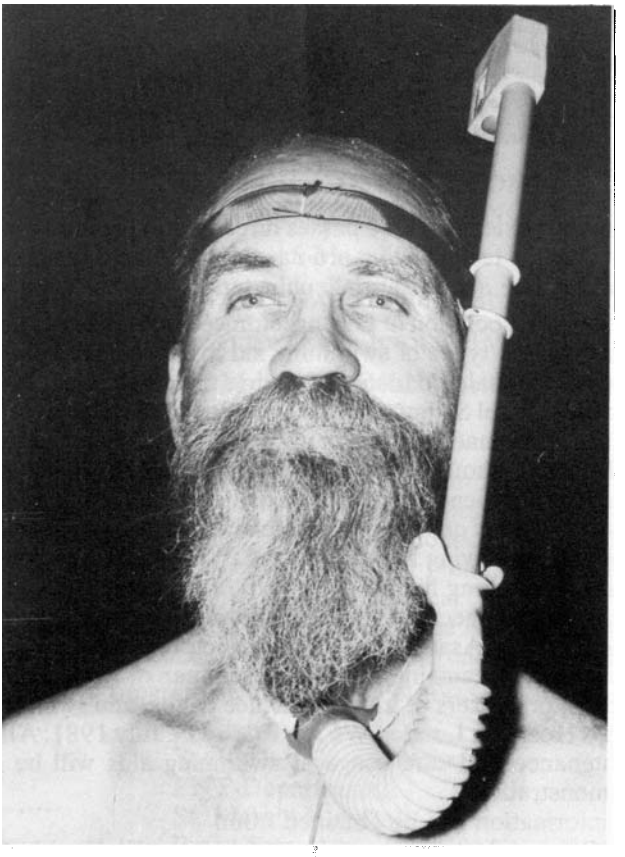


FIG. 1

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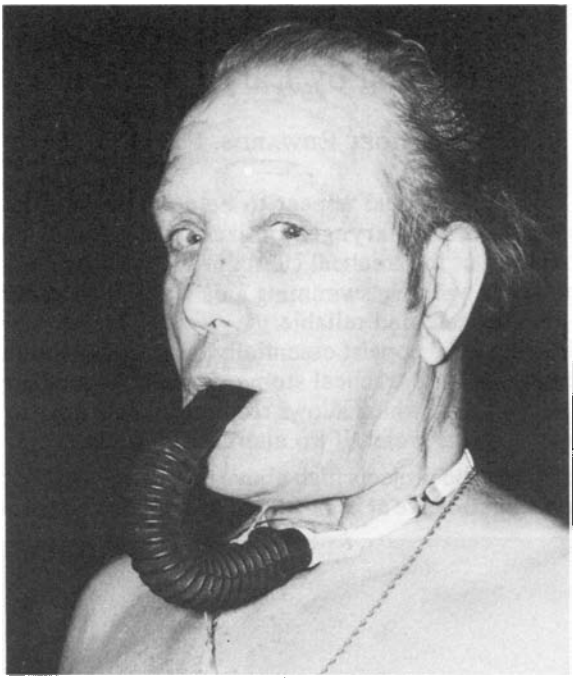


FIG. 2

2. The shorter extension tube passes directly into the mouth where its end is gripped by the teeth, so that oro-nasal respiration is restored (Fig. 2). The lips and palate act as natural sphincters to prevent ingress of water.

The National Association of Laryngectomee Clubs (NALC) held a practical trial of three different types of swimming aid in November 1980 at the pool in Charing Cross Hospital, London. Following this evaluation, NALC has now arranged for the 'Larkel Swimming Aid', developed in Belgium but now made in West Germany, to be made commercially available in the U.K. In view of the real danger of drowning should the swimming device fail, or become dislodged, correct selection of patient, fitting and supervision of the apparatus, and careful maintenance by suitably qualified professionals is mandatory. No laryngectomee should swim without having in attendance a trained swimmer who is capable of rescuing and resuscitating him.

Swimming by laryngectomees would therefore be best organized as a club activity. The National Association of Laryngectomee Clubs wishes to promote this activity and is organizing a one-day seminar or 'swim-in' for interested laryngectomees, organizers of Laryngectomee Clubs, and swimming trainers, at Charing Cross Hospital, London W6, on Friday 17 July 1981. All aspects of the fitting, maintenance and safe usage of swimming aids will be covered, with practical demonstrations.

Further information can be obtained from:

The National Association of Laryngectomee Clubs, 4th Floor, Michael Sobell House, 30 Dorset Square, London NW1 6QL. Tel.: 01-402 6007.

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