Setopress bandages for snakebite and sprains

As Australian snake venom is carried in the lymphatic system the first aid treatment is to use a pressure bandage to wrap the bitten limb from fingers to armpit or toes to groin. Imobilise the limb, and transport the patient to care. Do not allow them to walk out.

Many of us carry a crepe bandage, or even better, an elastic Ace bandage to do this. However on the Training Weekend, many members were a little surprised when they attempted to use these to apply first aid. The crepe bandages were essentially useless. Even with two of the heavier elastic bandages, it was impossible to wrap higher than just above the knee.

The bandage sometimes started to slip off straight away, and if it stayed up there was no way to tell if it was firm enough or too tight. (Blue toes or decreased venous return indicate that it is too tight, but it is then necessary to unwrap the bandage and start again, allowing a surge of venom into the body.)

A bandage that is designed to regulate venous drainage was much more effective. The Setopress Bandage which was demonstrated has a number of advantages. Primarily it is wider (10cm) and longer (3.5M) than most crepe or elastic bandages. This will allow a single bandage to reach the knee or armpit, and two to reach the groin.

To regulate the tightness (and therefore effective pressure) the bandage has a continuous series of green and brown rectangles printed along it's length. As the bandage is stretched, the green rectangles become squares. Increase the tension, and the brown rectangles become squares. At this tension lymphatic return is minimised, controlling flow of venom to the body.

The squares are printed off centre to assist in providing a controlled wrap of half width overlap at each turn by covering the visible squares at each wrap. This half width overlap is required to provide correct pressure, and also to prevent the bandage causing a tourniquet effect. Finally the bandage is textured, which helps to prevent it slipping down a conical thigh or calf, which would immediately reduce the pressure and effectiveness of the bandage. For gram counters, the weight is 59g.

This technology doesn't come cheap, at around $19.00 each. However they are designed to be washed and reused. They are at least as effective for other injuries such as a sprained ankle or twisted knee and can be used over a pad to control bleeding or alleviate something like a cracked rib, so they can replace crepe and elastic bandages in your first aid kit.

My rationale is that if someone is bandaging ME for a snakebite, I'll consider it money well spent. (And if I'm bandaging someone else who only has a crepe bandage with them, I'll send them the bill!!) They are often difficult and/or more expensive to get at your local pharmacy, so there are two online suppliers who I have purchased from.

Independence Australia have a website at http://www.independenceaustralia.com. Or phone 1300 788 855. Their product code is 23290110 and service and supply has been consistently excellent. Shipping is included in the price.

Home Pharmacy have a website at http://www.homepharmacy.com.au/home/ or phone 1800 333 878. Their product code is 387959. Their prices are lower, but don't include postage unless ordering over $150 which may be viable for a club. Supply has been a little inconsistent, but service is good and they have backordered in the past.

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