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- (71) Applicant (for all designated States except US): **THE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG** [CN/CN]; G18, Eliot Hall, Pokfulam Road, Hong Kong (CN).
- (72) Inventors: **KONG, Kamfu, James**; 2A, Excelsior Court, 83 Robinson Road, Mid-Levels, Hong Kong (CN). **WONG, Waikwok, Jimmy**; 33A Block 15, South Horizons, Ap Lei Chau, Hong Kong (CN). **LUK, Dipkei, Keith**; J13, Scenic Villas, 20 Scenic Villa Drive, Pokfulam, Hong Kong (CN).
- (74) Agent: **CHINA PATENT AGENT (H. K.) LTD.**; 22/F, Great Eagle Centre, 23 Harbour Road, Wanchai, Hong Kong (CN).
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(54) Title: CODED SURGICAL AIDS

(57) Abstract: The present invention can provide a coded surgical suture, which is capable of affording a visual identification effect for determining the direction or end portions of the surgical suture. The surgical suture can have an elongated body member having first and second end portions. A coding member can be provided on one of the two end portions of the body member to afford a visual identification effect. In an exemplary embodiment, the coding member can have a color element. The present invention can also provide a coding system for identifying the direction or the end portions of a surgical suture or for distinguishing between different surgical sutures.

CODED SURGICAL AIDS**CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION**

This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/466,346 filed April 29, 2003.

5 **FIELD OF THE INVENTION**

The present invention generally relates to a surgical aid, such as a surgical suture. In particular, the present invention relates to a coded surgical suture. Moreover, the present invention relates to a system for coding various surgical aids, such as surgical sutures.

10 **BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

Surgical sutures are commonly used in various medical procedures, such as minimal invasive surgeries. Typically, one viewing portal and at least two working portals are needed when physicians use surgical sutures. With conventional surgical sutures, it is difficult to determine intraoperatively the movement direction of a suture due to the difficulty in identifying the correct suture end. Consequently, the wrong suture end can be pulled by mistake, which can cause the entire suture to be pulled out accidentally or undesirable twisting in the suture.

U.S. Patent No. 3,642,003 discloses a suture having long-lasting germicidal properties. The sutures are rendered germicidal for long periods of time by contacting the suture with an aqueous solution of a cationic or anionic germicidal surface active agent such as a germicidal quaternary ammonium salt or a germicidal organic sulfonate to chemically bond the germicidal cation or anion of the salt to the proteinaceous substrate.

U.S. Patent Nos. 3,674,901 and 3,807,273 each disclose a process for preparing the sutures. U.S. Patent No. 3,807,273 discloses a method of making a pliable, dyed and braided polyester thread. The method comprises winding a polyester strand loosely around a perforated hollow dyeing element, passing dye under pressure through the winding of the polyester strand, hot-stretching the dyed strand to reduce the elastic memory thereof, coating the hot-stretched strand with a liquid, film-forming material adherent but substantially inert to said polyester strand, braiding a plurality of the coated filaments into a braided thread, and removing the film-forming material.

U.S. Patent No. 3,987,797 discloses an antimicrobial surgical suture coated with an ionically bonded block elastomeric copolymer of polyquaternary polyurethane and a polyanionic polymer such as heparin. The coated suture is receptive to dyes for the preparation of colored sutures.

5 U.S. Patent No. 4,470,941 discloses sutures comprising dissimilar synthetic polymer materials. U.S. Patent No. 5,454,834 discloses a suture material having at least one inherently stable coil or loop along its length. U.S. Patent No. 6,264,675 discloses a suture with an elongated body member having a needle and thread member disposed at one end and retention structure at the other end. U.S. Patent No. 4,545,769 discloses a
10 suture thread comprising a jacket or sheath of a tubular braided structure made of yarns and a core located within the jacket containing crimped fibers. U.S. Patent No. 5,766,188 discloses that a medical suturing material is loaded onto an automatic suturing device having a staple line when being used.

The present invention provides a coded surgical suture, which is capable of
15 affording a visual identification effect for determining the direction or ends of the surgical suture. The present invention also provides a color coding system for identifying the direction or ends of a surgical suture.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention can provide a coded surgical suture, which is capable of
20 affording a visual identification effect for determining the direction or ends of a surgical suture. The suture can comprise an elongated body member having first and second end portions. A coding member can be provided on one of the first and second end portions to distinguish one end portion from the other, affording a visual identification effect. In one embodiment, the coding member can comprise different first and second coding
25 members formed on the end portions the body member to provide different visual effects.

The present invention can also provide a coding system for identifying the direction or the end portions of a surgical suture or for distinguishing between different surgical sutures.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

30 For the purposes of promoting an understanding of the principles of the present invention, various exemplary embodiments will now be discussed in great details.

The present invention can provide a coded surgical aid, such as a surgical suture. In one embodiment, the surgical aid can comprise a body member extending between a first end portion and a second end portion. A coding member can be provided to be affixed to at least one of the first and second end portions and extending toward the other of the end portions to distinguish the first end portion from the second end portion. For example, the coding member is capable of making the first and second end portions to exhibit different visual effects. The present invention can also provide a coding system for identifying the direction or end portions of a surgical suture or for distinguishing between different surgical sutures.

In one exemplary embodiment, the surgical suture can comprise a body member having first and second end portions. The body member can have various shapes, lengths, diameters, and/or cross-sections. For example, the body member can be an elongated body member having a length between the two end portions. In one exemplary embodiment, the body member can be a thread member. In an exemplary embodiment, the thread member can be formed of a single strand. In another exemplary embodiment, the body member can be formed of multi-filament strands. For example, the multi-filament strands can be twisted or braided to form the body member.

Additionally or alternatively, the body member can be made of various materials. For example, such as natural materials (*e.g.*, silk) or synthetic materials (*e.g.*, polyester). In one exemplary embodiment, the body member can be made of a flexible material. It will be appreciated that other embodiments of the body member are also within the scope of the present invention.

In one embodiment, the surgical suture can comprise a coding member provided on one of the end portions of the body member. For example, the coding member can be affixed to a first end portion of the surgical suture. In one exemplary embodiment, the coding member can extend for about 1 % to about 99 % of the entire length of the body member. In an exemplary embodiment, the coding member can extend from one end portion to the middle portion of the body member. In another exemplary embodiment, different first and second coding members can be provided at both end portions of the body member to provide a differential visual identification effect. In an exemplary embodiment, the first and second coding members can extend from the respective first and second end portions to the middle portion of the body member.

The coding member can be in various forms, to provide a visual differentiation and/or identification effect. In one exemplary embodiment, the coding member can comprise various color elements, such as to afford an apparent visual contrasting effect. For example, the coding member can comprise a color element of red, green, orange, blue, and etc. In an exemplary embodiment, the coding member can be a single color element. In another exemplary embodiment, the color element can be formed in various ways, such as colored at a different and/or variable extent. For example, the color element can have a gradation of colors, multiple colors, a varying intensity, or a design pattern. In one exemplary embodiment, the color element can comprise a gradual change in color intensity, such as to provide a gradation of color change. For example, the color intensity can decrease from the end portion toward the middle portion of the body member. The color changes can assist the surgeon to visually identify the direction of the suture and/or the location of an end portion during a medical procedure, such as an arthroscopic or endoscopic operation. It will be appreciated that other embodiments of the color element are also within the scope of the present invention.

In another exemplary embodiment, the coding member can be formed to comprise a plurality of coding sections. For example, the plural coding sections can have different color elements, lengths, and the like. In an exemplary embodiment, first and second coding sections can be formed to have different colors from each other. In another exemplary embodiment, a plurality of coding sections can be provided to be positioned at various intervals along the length of the elongated body member, such as to achieve an apparent visual contrasting effect. In one exemplary embodiment, the plural coding sections can be positioned at one end portion of the elongated body member. It will be appreciated that other embodiments of the coding sections are also within the scope of the present invention.

In a further exemplary embodiment, the coding member can be formed to have various coding patterns, such as of shapes, lengths, or arrangement, to afford a different identification effect. In an exemplary embodiment, the coding member can have a spiral pattern extending along the body member. In another exemplary embodiment, the coding member can comprising a plurality of coding sections where the spacing between the adjacent coding sections can increase from one end portion toward the other end portion of the body member. In a further exemplary embodiment, the plural coding sections can

have different colors or gradation of colors. It will be appreciated that other embodiments of the coding patterns are also within the scope of the present invention.

The coding member can be formed by various conventional methods. For example, the coding member can be coated, sprayed, glued, dyed, stained, or otherwise affixed onto the body member. In an exemplary embodiment, the color element can be formed by a dying process. For example, gradation of change in color intensity can be employed in a dying process to form a color element. In another exemplary embodiment, the coding member can be integrally formed with the body member. It will be appreciated that other embodiments of forming the coding member are also within the scope of the present invention.

Although the above description is made in connection with an exemplary surgical suture, it will be appreciate that the present invention is applicable to various other surgical aids.

According to another aspect of the present invention, a coding system can be provided to distinguish between a plurality of surgical aids. For example, the coding system can comprise a plurality of surgical aids each having a body member extending between two end portions, such as described above. In an exemplary embodiment, the first end portion of each of the surgical aids can be identified with a first coding member. For example, the surgical aids are color coded. In one exemplary embodiment, the first coding members can differ from one another. Additionally or alternatively, the second end portion of each of the surgical aids can be identified with a second coding member. In an exemplary embodiment, the second coding members can differ from one another. It will be appreciated that other embodiments of the coding system are also within the scope of the present invention.

In anther exemplary embodiment, the different first coding members can be predetermined or otherwise recorded for users' reference. For example, the coding system can enable a user to identify each surgical aid even when more than one surgical aides are used. Additionally or alternatively, the coding system can assist a user to match a first surgical aid with a second surgical aid by following the coding scheme.

Optionally, the surgical aids can comprise various accessory elements to facilitate to manipulate the surgical aids. For example, an anchor or a needle can be provided to one or both end portions of a surgical suture to facilitate the formation of a

knot. It will be appreciated that other embodiments of the surgical suture are also within the scope of the present invention.

It will be appreciated that the various features described herein may be used singly or in any combination thereof. Therefore, the present invention is not limited to
5 only the embodiments specifically described herein. While the foregoing description and drawings represent a preferred embodiment of the present invention, it will be understood that various additions, modifications, and substitutions may be made therein without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention as defined in the accompanying claims. In particular, it will be clear to those skilled in the art that the
10 present invention may be embodied in other specific forms, structures, arrangements, proportions, and with other elements, materials, and components, without departing from the spirit or essential characteristics thereof. One skilled in the art will appreciate that the invention may be used with many modifications of structure, arrangement, proportions, materials, and components and otherwise, used in the practice of the invention, which are
15 particularly adapted to specific environments and operative requirements without departing from the principles of the present invention. The presently disclosed embodiment is therefore to be considered in all respects as illustrative and not restrictive, the scope of the invention being indicated by the appended claims, and not limited to the foregoing description.

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A surgical suture comprising:
a body member extending between a first end portion and a second end
5 portion; and
a coding member affixed to at least one of the first and second end portions
and extending toward the other of the end portions;
wherein the coding member distinguishes the first end portion from the second
end portion.
- 10 2. The surgical suture of claim 1, wherein the first and second end portions
exhibit different visual effects.
3. The surgical suture of claim 1, wherein the coding member is integrally
formed with the body member.
4. The surgical suture of claim 1 being made of a flexible material.
- 15 5. The surgical suture of claim 1, wherein the coding member extends for
about 1% to about 99% of the length of the body member.
6. The surgical suture of claim 11, wherein the coding member extends to a
middle portion of the body member.
7. The surgical suture of claim 1, wherein
20 the first and second end portions are provided with first and second coding
members, respectively; and
the first and second coding members differ from each other.
8. The surgical suture of claim 7, wherein the first and second coding
members extend from the first and second end portions, respectively, to a middle portion
25 of the body member.
9. The surgical suture of claim 1, wherein the coding member comprises a
color element.

10. The surgical suture of claim 9, wherein the coding member comprises one single color element.
11. The surgical suture of claim 10, wherein the color element has a varying color intensity.
- 5 12. The surgical suture of claim 10, wherein the color element has a color gradation.
13. The surgical suture of claim 1, wherein the coding member comprises a plurality of coding sections.
- 10 14. The surgical suture of claim 13, wherein the coding member comprises a plurality of color elements.
- 15 15. The surgical suture of claim 1 further comprising an accessory element to facilitate the formation of a knot.
16. A coded surgical aid comprising:
a body member extending between two end portions; and
15 a coding member affixed to a first end portion and extending toward a second end portion;
wherein the coding member distinguishes the first end portion from the second end portion.
17. The coded surgical aid of claim 16 being a surgical suture.
- 20 18. A coding system for surgical aids, comprising
providing a plurality of surgical aids each having a body member extending between two end portions; and
identifying a first end portion of each surgical aid with a first coding member;
wherein the plurality of surgical aids have different first coding members.
- 25 19. The coding system of claim 18 comprising identifying a second end portion of each surgical aid with a second coding member.
20. The coding system of claim 18, wherein the surgical aids are color coded.

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No. PCT/CN2004/000400
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A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC⁷ A61L17/00 A61B17/06

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC⁷ A61L, A61K, A61B, A61M,

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

CN-PAT

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

WPI, EPODOC, PAJ, CN-PAT, CNKI


C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	JP, A, 8-131450 (YAMA-I), 28.May.1996 (28.05.1996), see claim 1 and page 1	1-20
X	US, A, 6029806 (ETHI), 29.Feb.2000 (29.02.2000), see claim 8	16-20
X	US, A, 4932965 (PHIL-I), 12.Jun. 1990 (12.06.1990), see claims 5, 11	16-20
A	CN, A, 1365265 (BETH-N), 21.Aug.2002 (21.08.2002), whole document	1-20
A	US, A, 4897037 (APPL-I), 30.Jan.1990 (30.01.1990), whole document	1-20

Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C. See patent family annex.

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| <p>* Special categories of cited documents:</p> <p>“A” document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance</p> <p>“E” earlier application or patent but published on or after the international filing date</p> <p>“L” document which may throw doubts on priority claim (S) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)</p> <p>“O” document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means</p> <p>“P” document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed</p> | <p>“T” later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention</p> <p>“X” document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone</p> <p>“Y” document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art</p> <p>“&” document member of the same patent family</p> |
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Name and mailing address of the ISA/CN 6 Xitucheng Rd, Jimen Bridge, Haidian District, Beijing 100088, China Facsimile No. (86-10)62019451	Authorized officer <div style="text-align: center;">  Zhou Wenjuan </div> Telephone No. (86-10)62084837
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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT
Information on patent family members

International application No.

PCT/CN2004/000400

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