

Technical note

Battling trismus: the “Pat-Bite” device

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Trismus¹ is commonly encountered as a postoperative sequela in many aspects of oral and maxillofacial surgery including oncology, trauma, temporomandibular joint and reconstructive surgery. It is often difficult to manage effectively, and patients' lack of compliance with treatment compounds the problem.

Although various mechanical aids such as the TheraBite® (Platon Medical Ltd., Eastbourne, UK) can help to increase mouth opening they are often too expensive for routine use. With this in mind we describe a simple, inexpensive, yet effective device that can be constructed easily and used by patients to aid mouth opening.

The device (Patient Bite or Pat-Bite) consists of 3–4 tongue spatulas fastened at right angles above and below a syringe (20–25 ml capacity) and held in place by 2 elastic bands in a criss-cross arrangement (Fig. 1). The patient places one end of the spatulas in the mouth then presses the other end, which acts as a lever and helps to open the mouth (Fig. 2). We have found that regular use by patients can help to achieve maximal mouth opening.



Fig. 1. The device.

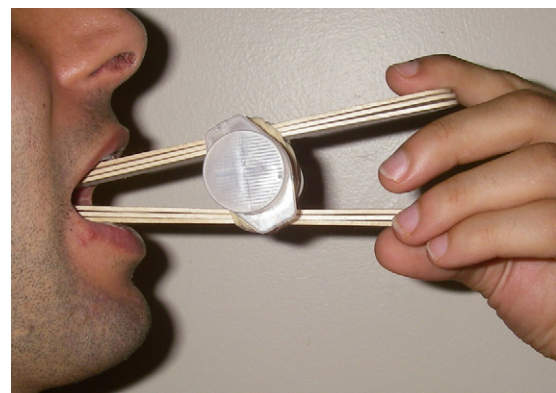


Fig. 2. The device in use.

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¹ While this appliance may not be suitable for those with for example, rheumatoid hands, it is a novel technique which might also allow some degree of ‘springing’ the trismus. We have tried this device and found it very useful for patients—L. Cascarini, P.A. Brennan.