

A Modified Soft Tissue Retractor for Meniscal Repair

Bernard R. Bach, Jr., M.D.

Advances in our understanding of meniscal healing properties have created increased efforts to surgically preserve and repair menisci (1-4). Various techniques for meniscal repair have been advocated including arthroscopic, and combined open-arthroscopic "inside-out" or "outside-in" techniques (2-5). Henning has developed retractors (Stryker Co., Kalamazoo, MI) (Fig. 1) to protect the posteromedial and posterolateral aspects of the knee from possible nerve or vascular injury using "inside-out" techniques. We are reporting the use of a modified soft tissue retractor that we improvised in an operating room setting. We feel that orthopedic surgeons should know that this is available in any operating room if the Henning meniscal

From the Section of Sports Medicine, Department of Orthopedic Surgery, Rush-Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical Center, Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A.

Address correspondence and reprint requests to Dr. B. R. Bach, Jr., Section of Sports Medicine, Department of Orthopedic Surgery, Rush-Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical Center, 1725 West Harrison Street, Suite 492, Chicago, IL 60612, U.S.A.

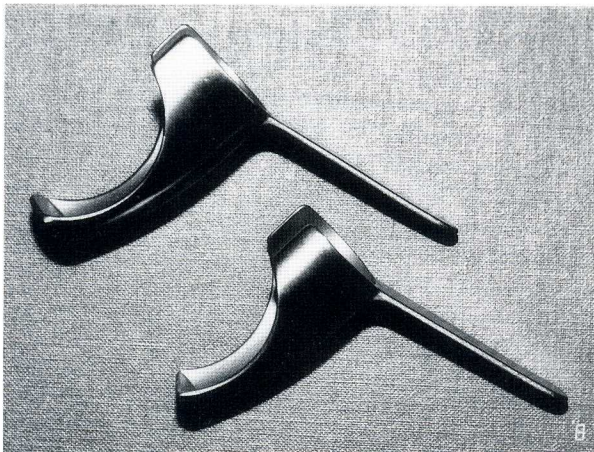


FIG. 1. Henning meniscal retractors.

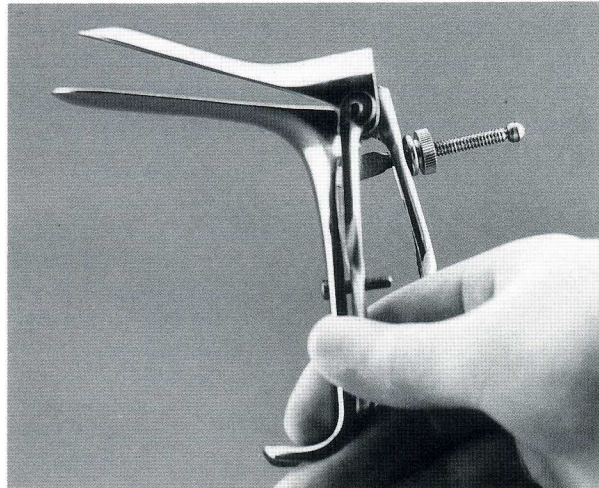


FIG. 2. Assembled small adult vaginal speculum.

retractors or other meniscal retractors are unavailable.

A small adult vaginal speculum (Fig. 2) may be modified quickly for use as a "meniscal retractor" (Fig. 3). The speculum is 8 cm long, concave, and

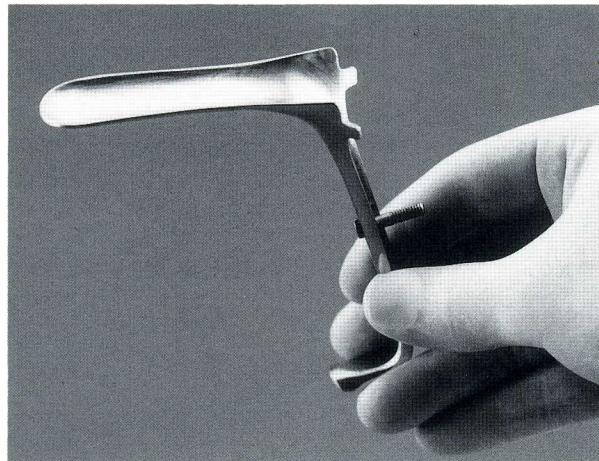


FIG. 3. Disassembled small adult vaginal speculum. Note that the blade is concave and the tip is rounded.

has a gentle rounded curve at its tip. A threaded nut may be removed and the speculum disassembled to provide the surgeon with an appropriate length retractor for either medial or lateral meniscal repair. The retractor can easily be inserted extracapsular and anterior to the medial or lateral heads of the gastrochemius. The 23-mm width allows ample protection at the joint line, and the concavity allows flexible meniscal needles to follow the concavity of the retractor.

The Henning meniscal repair retractors and other meniscal retractors are a valuable addition to our surgical instrumentation armamentarium. If these retractors are not available, a modified small adult vaginal speculum provides excellent protection.

REFERENCES

1. Arnoczky SP, Warren RF. Microvasculature of the human meniscus. *Am J Sports Med* 1982;10(2):90-5.
2. Clancy W, Graft B. Arthroscopic meniscal repair. *Orthopedics* 1983;6:1125-92.
3. DeHaven KE. Peripheral meniscal repair. An alternative to meniscectomy. *Orthop Trans* 1981;5:399-400.
4. DeHaven KE. Meniscus repair—open vs. arthroscopic. *Arthroscopy* 1985;3:173-4.
5. Henning CE, Lynch MA, Jelly GL, Scott OA. *Arthroscopic meniscal repair*. Presented at AOSS Meeting, Anaheim, California, 1984.
6. King D. The healing of semilunar cartilages. *J Bone Joint Surg* 1936;18:333-42.
7. Scapinelli R. Studies on the vasculature of the human knee joint. *Acta Anat* 1968;70:305-31.