Recent changes in availability of IUDs in the UK

Copper T 380 banded copper devices

For commercial reasons Janssen-Cilag, has taken the decision to stop production of the Gyne T 380 (Cu T 380S).

This device, which had been widely accepted as the first-line choice for insertion where suitable in the UK, was a special adaptation of the Cu T 380A device that is commonly available in many countries across the world. There will now be a Cu T 380A device (TSafe 380A) listed on the Drug Tariff.

The Cu T 380S adaptation involves countersinking the copper bands into the polyethylene of the T arms. As a result it is possible to load the T arms almost completely into the insertion tube, so the loaded insertion tube that needs to pass through the cervical canal has a maximum width of just over 4.4 mm.

The Cu T 380A has copper bands swaged onto the polyethylene of the T arms, so the bands sit proud from the surface. It is not possible to fit these arms into the insertion tube in the same way as with the device we have been used to. The arms will only fit into the insertion tube up to the protruding copper bands, giving an oval of maximum width of 6.6 mm that needs to be passed through the cervical canal at insertion.

Health professionals fitting IUDs must be aware of this difference in loading technique between the Cu T 380S that has been available and the Cu T 380A design (T Safe 380A) now available. This device is licensed for up to 8 years of use.

The most recently available Janssen-Cilag Cu T 380S devices were presented ready for loading with an extremely simple no-touch technique which also allowed the depth of insertion to be pre-set easily.

The T Safe 380A has the device, insertion tube and insertion rod within the sterile wrap with no markings to help set the depth of insertion required. Successive versions of the Janssen-Cilag Cu T 380S had developed tools enclosed within the sterile wrap to help those who had difficulty loading the device and make it simple to set the correct depth for insertion through the wrapping and allow no-touch insertion. The T Safe 380A does not have these additional refinements.

The difference in loaded insertion tube width has implications for clinical practice: facilities for analgesia and a range of available devices for insertion will minimise potential problems. Doctors who cannot load the device in the sterile pack will need to use sterile gloves, and will not achieve no-touch insertion. Setting the depth for insertion will involve a separate step of transferring the uterine sound measurement to set the stop of the device.

Nova T 380Ag device

This device is newly on the Drug Tariff and is identical with the Nova T 200Ag device, except that it has an increased amount of copper wire wound round the stem. It is licensed for up to 5 years of use. There is little published evidence of research specific to this device, but it might be expected to provide better contraceptive efficacy than the device providing only 200 square millimetres of copper surface area.

In view of the changing availability and somewhat confusing nomenclature of the different Cu 380 IUDs it will be necessary to specify exactly in medical records which Cu T 380 device has been fitted for each woman.

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