

is not differentiated by quinacrine technique is differentiated by giemsa as a fine knob at the end of a pair of chromosomes (figure 1b arrowed). Also, the slides with C-bands can be kept permanently for record. On the other hand, the quinacrine technique has the practical applicability for screening of a large amount of material, because of much simpler process of slide preparation.

2 June 1986

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NEWS

SEAWEED DRESSING FOR WOUNDS

The healing properties of seaweed have long been known to seafarers, and now a British company has been established to spin the weed into dressings for cuts, post-surgical wounds and external ulcers. The company—Cair Ltd., of Aldershot (Southern England)—claims that the healing properties of its new dressing, called Kaltostat, are quite remarkable.

The "sailor's cure", as it was called in the old days, was put to use again by Major George Blaine, who served with the British Royal Army Medical Corps in World War II. He investigated the use of seaweed, which is rich in calcium alginate, and used it to dress wounds. The practice was never developed.

Biochemical engineer David Tong decided to re-investigate the technology and invented a wet spinning process to convert deep-trawled brown seaweed into sterilisable fibres of pure calcium alginate. The substance works chemically, the calcium combining with a sodium compound in the blood to form a protective gel that keeps the wound moist. The calcium also

encourages fast clotting.

The alginate fibres are absorbed naturally by the body, so that the dressing can be left undisturbed for a long period. If used on a cut, for instance, it need be removed only when the scab is ready to come off.

In cases where frequent dressing changes are needed, the protective gel ensures that the delicate regenerative tissue is not damaged.

Cair has carried out extensive tests with Kaltostat at teaching hospitals in Oxford, Cardiff and London, and has won a product licence from Britain's Department of Health and Social Security.

"It does heal wound very quickly, and does not cause any irritation or allergic reactions," says Mr. Bob Browning, Cair's marketing manager. "We think it ideal for use in casualty departments and are now in negotiations with major pharmaceutical companies to market Kaltostat worldwide." (*Spectrum*, 197, p. 12, 1986; *British Science News*, R. P. Nash, British High Commission, New Delhi 110 028).
