
Postgraduate Certificate in Embalming Chemistry (United Kingdom)

Embalming Fluid Formulation

Aldehyde

Concept: Primary preservative agent in most embalming fluids.

Related terms: formaldehyde, glutaraldehyde.

Explanation: Aldehydes cross-link protein amino groups, stabilising tissue architecture. Example: 4% formaldehyde solution is standard for short-term preservation. Challenges include tissue rigidity and health risks from inhalation.

Alkaline buffer

Concept: Solution used to adjust pH of embalming fluid.

Related terms: phosphate buffer, carbonate system.

Explanation: Maintains fluid pH between 6.5 and 8.0, optimising aldehyde reactivity and reducing tissue discoloration. Practical use: adding sodium bicarbonate to achieve desired pH. Over-buffering can cause tissue swelling.

Anaerobic preservation

Concept: Technique relying on low-oxygen environments to inhibit microbial growth.

Related terms: vacuum sealing, nitrogen flushing.

Explanation: Used for specimens requiring long-term storage without aldehydes. Example: storing organs in nitrogen-purged containers. Challenges include ensuring complete oxygen removal and monitoring for anaerobic bacterial proliferation.

Arterial embalming

Concept: Delivery of fluid into the arterial system to distribute preservative.

Related terms: arterial injection, cavernous sinus.

Explanation: Fluid travels with blood flow, reaching capillaries. Practical steps: cannulating the carotid artery, controlling flow rate. Risks include incomplete perfusion if arterial clots are present.

Arterial injection

Concept: Specific method of introducing embalming fluid into arteries.

Related terms: arterial embalming, venous drainage.

Explanation: Utilises a pump to maintain pressure, typically 30-45 mmHg. Example: injecting 2 L of fluid for an average adult. Common challenge: avoiding over-pressurisation that can cause tissue rupture.

Arterial pressure

Concept: The hydrostatic pressure applied during fluid injection.

Related terms: pump settings, vascular resistance.

Explanation: Proper pressure ensures fluid reaches distal tissues without extravasation. Typical range: 30-45 mmHg. Adjustments may be needed for atherosclerotic vessels.

Arterial system

Concept: Network of arteries delivering oxygenated blood (and embalming fluid).

Related terms: aorta, carotid artery.

Explanation: Understanding major branches aids in selecting injection sites. Example: using the femoral artery for lower limb preservation. Complications arise from arterial calcification.

Artemisinin

Concept: Plant-derived compound occasionally explored as a preservative additive.

Related terms: natural preservative, antimicrobial agent.

Explanation: Exhibits mild antimicrobial activity but limited cross-linking ability. Currently experimental; main challenge is regulatory approval for mortuary use.

Asphyxiant chemicals

Concept: Substances that can depress the respiratory system when inhaled.

Related terms: formaldehyde vapour, glutaraldehyde fumes.

Explanation: Safety protocols require ventilation and respiratory protection. Example: using fume hoods during fluid preparation. Failure to control exposure can lead to health hazards.

Aqueous phase

Concept: Water-based component of embalming fluid.

Related terms: solvent system, hydrophilic additives.

Explanation: Determines fluid viscosity and aids in distributing soluble preservatives. Example: adding 10% glycerol to improve fluid flow. Excess water may dilute preservative concentration.

Arsenic compounds

Concept: Historical preservatives now largely prohibited.

Related terms: arsine gas, toxic heavy metals.

Explanation: Provided long-term preservation but posed severe health risks. Modern regulations in the UK forbid their use. Understanding legacy cases helps in forensic analysis.

Autolysis inhibition

Concept: Preventing self-digestion of cells after death.

Related terms: enzyme denaturation, preservative action.

Explanation: Aldehyde fixation blocks lysosomal enzymes, slowing autolysis. Example: rapid injection of fluid within 2 hours post-mortem reduces tissue breakdown. Delayed embalming increases autolysis severity.

Back-pressure valve

Concept: Device regulating fluid flow during injection.

Related terms: pump regulator, pressure control.

Explanation: Prevents excessive pressure that could damage vessels. Practical use: setting valve to 35 mmHg for average adult. Malfunction may cause fluid leakage.

Barbiturate additives

Concept: Sedatives occasionally incorporated to reduce post-mortem rigor.

Related terms: phenobarbital, sedative effect.

Explanation: Low concentrations can relax muscles, facilitating positioning. Example: 0.5 % phenobarbital in fluid. Over-use may cause excessive tissue softening.

Base-catalysed hydrolysis

Concept: Chemical reaction where a base accelerates breakdown of compounds.

Related terms: alkaline hydrolysis, pH adjustment.

Explanation: In embalming, high pH can degrade aldehydes, reducing effectiveness. Maintaining neutral pH avoids this issue.

Bleaching agents

Concept: Chemicals used to lighten tissue discoloration.

Related terms: hydrogen peroxide, sodium hypochlorite.

Explanation: Applied after fixation to improve cosmetic appearance. Example: 3 % hydrogen peroxide spray on facial tissues. Over-use may cause tissue brittleness.

Blood-borne pathogens

Concept: Infectious agents transmitted via blood.

Related terms: HIV, HBV, HCV.

Explanation: Embalming staff must use universal precautions. Use of preservative fluid can inactivate many pathogens, but proper PPE remains essential.

Buffer capacity

Concept: Ability of a solution to resist pH change.

Related terms: alkaline buffer, acidic buffer.

Explanation: High buffer capacity maintains optimal pH during fluid-tissue interaction. Example: 0.1 M phosphate buffer offers robust control. Insufficient capacity leads to pH drift and reduced fixation.

Bronchial artery embalming

Concept: Targeted injection into the bronchial arteries for thoracic preservation.

Related terms: lung fixation, arterial injection.

Explanation: Improves lung tissue rigidity and colour. Practical tip: use a 20-gauge catheter and low pressure to avoid alveolar rupture. Challenges include navigating small arterial branches.

Calcium chelation

Concept: Binding of calcium ions to prevent tissue hardening.

Related terms: EDTA, softening agents.

Explanation: EDTA (0.5 % w/v) added to fluid can reduce calcification in vascular tissues. Over-chelation may weaken structural integrity.

Carboxylate preservatives

Concept: Organic salts that provide antimicrobial activity.

Related terms: propionate, acetate.

Explanation: Often used as secondary preservatives. Example: sodium acetate (1 %) improves fluid stability.

Limited effect on protein fixation.

Carotid artery

Concept: Major cervical artery commonly used for embalming injection.

Related terms: arterial embalming, cavernous sinus.

Explanation: Accessible location and direct flow to head. Procedure: isolate and cannulate the artery, secure with a clamp. Anatomical variations may require alternative sites.

Cellular fixation

Concept: Chemical process that stabilises cell structures.

Related terms: aldehyde cross-linking, protein denaturation.

Explanation: Aldehydes react with amino groups, forming methylene bridges. Resulting tissue retains morphology for viewing and dissection. Inadequate fixation leads to tissue degradation.

Centrifugal separation

Concept: Technique to remove particulate matter from fluid.

Related terms: filtration, clarification.

Explanation: Spinning fluid at 3000 rpm for 10 minutes yields clear solution, preventing clogging of injection lines. Requires appropriate equipment and safety measures.

Chemical stabiliser

Concept: Additive that prolongs shelf-life of embalming fluid.

Related terms: antioxidant, preservative.

Explanation: Examples include sodium metabisulphite (0.2 %) to prevent aldehyde oxidation.

Over-stabilisation may reduce fluid reactivity.

Chromatic correction

Concept: Adjusting fluid composition to achieve desired tissue colour.

Related terms: pigment additives, bleaching agents.

Explanation: Adding small amounts of red or blue dyes can counteract pallor. Example: 0.05 % red dye for a healthier complexion. Requires precise dosing to avoid unnatural hues.

Citric acid buffer

Concept: Acidic buffer system used in fluid formulation.

Related terms: pH adjustment, buffer capacity.

Explanation: Provides pH 4-5 range for specific preservation protocols. Often combined with sodium citrate.

Excess acid can cause tissue softening.

Clotting agents

Concept: Substances that promote blood coagulation during embalming.

Related terms: thrombin, hemostatic powders.

Explanation: Used to prevent blood pooling that interferes with fluid distribution. Example: topical thrombin applied to wound sites. Must be used judiciously to avoid blockage of vessels.

Coagulation inhibition

Concept: Preventing blood clot formation to ensure fluid flow.

Related terms: anticoagulants, heparin.

Explanation: Heparin (500 IU L⁻¹) added to fluid reduces clotting. Balancing anticoagulation prevents both clots and excessive bleeding.

Cold-induced fixation

Concept: Using low temperatures to aid preservative penetration.

Related terms: refrigeration, cryopreservation.

Explanation: Cooling the body to 4 °C prior to injection slows autolysis, allowing fluid to act more effectively.

Practical limitation: availability of refrigeration facilities.

Collagen cross-linking

Concept: Chemical bonds formed between collagen fibers during fixation.

Related terms: aldehyde fixation, tissue rigidity.

Explanation: Increases tensile strength, essential for handling during viewing. Over-cross-linking can make tissue brittle and difficult to dissect.

Colorimetric indicator

Concept: Dye that changes hue with pH or oxidation state.

Related terms: phenol red, pH strip.

Explanation: Added to fluid (0.02 %) to monitor pH changes during preparation. Provides visual cue for quality control. Must be stable under preservative conditions.

Combined arterial-cavernous embalming

Concept: Simultaneous injection into arterial and cavernous sinus systems.

Related terms: cavernous sinus embalming, dual-route perfusion.

Explanation: Enhances facial tissue fixation, especially for delicate features. Requires coordinated pump control to balance pressures. Complexity increases risk of over-pressurisation.

Compounding safety

Concept: Procedures to protect staff during fluid preparation.

Related terms: PPE, fume extraction.

Explanation: Use of gloves, goggles, and ventilated hoods reduces exposure to toxic chemicals. Regular training and incident reporting are essential components.

Concentration gradient

Concept: Difference in preservative concentration between fluid and tissue.

Related terms: diffusion, osmotic pressure.

Explanation: Drives movement of aldehydes into cells. Maintaining appropriate gradient ensures effective fixation. High viscosity fluids may reduce gradient efficiency.

Cross-link density

Concept: Measure of the number of chemical bridges formed in tissue.

Related terms: collagen rigidity, tissue elasticity.

Explanation: Determined by aldehyde concentration and exposure time. Higher density yields firmer tissue but may impede later dissection.

Cyanoacrylate adhesives

Concept: Fast-curing glues occasionally used for wound closure post-embalming.

Related terms: tissue sealing, surface bonding.

Explanation: Provides cosmetic repair of incisions. Must be used sparingly to avoid interfering with later autopsy or forensic analysis.

Decomposition gases

Concept: Volatile compounds released during autolysis.

Related terms: methanethiol, hydrogen sulfide.

Explanation: Their presence indicates inadequate preservation. Proper fluid formulation reduces gas production. Monitoring gas levels can guide post-mortem handling.

Dehydration control

Concept: Managing loss of water from tissues during preservation.

Related terms: humectants, glycerol.

Explanation: Adding glycerol (5-10 %) helps retain moisture, preventing tissue shrinkage. Excessive dehydration leads to brittleness.

Denaturation temperature

Concept: Temperature at which proteins unfold.

Related terms: thermal fixation, heat-induced coagulation.

Explanation: Aldehyde fixation lowers the denaturation temperature, allowing preservation at lower ambient temperatures. Knowledge assists in planning for high-temperature environments.

Dermal pigmentation

Concept: Colour of skin after embalming.

Related terms: melanin retention, pigment additives.

Explanation: Aldehyde can cause skin to appear pale; adding melanin-based pigments can restore natural tone. Requires careful matching to donor ethnicity.

Disinfection protocol

Concept: Steps to sterilise equipment and work surfaces.

Related terms: surface decontamination, chemical sanitiser.

Explanation: Use of 1 % sodium hypochlorite solution after each case reduces cross-contamination. Adequate contact time (10 min) is essential.

Distillation purification

Concept: Removing impurities from fluid components via heating.

Related terms: fractional distillation, solvent recovery.

Explanation: Applied to water and alcohol fractions to achieve high purity. Requires closed systems to prevent aldehyde loss.

Dual-phase emulsion

Concept: Mixture of oil-based and water-based components in fluid.

Related terms: surfactant, emulsifier.

Explanation: Improves distribution of lipophilic additives such as essential oils. Example: 0.5 % Tween-80 used as emulsifier. Stability may be compromised over time.

Dyspnea risk

Concept: Potential for respiratory distress among staff due to vapour exposure.

Related terms: asphyxiant chemicals, ventilation.

Explanation: Monitoring ambient aldehyde levels (Effective dosage

Concept: Amount of preservative needed per kilogram of body weight.

Related terms: dose calculation, fluid volume.

Explanation: Standard practice: 5-7 mL kg⁻¹ of fluid. Adjustments made for body composition, time since death, and desired preservation length.

Embalming fluid viscosity

Concept: Measure of fluid's resistance to flow.

Related terms: thickening agents, shear rate.

Explanation: Viscosity influences injection pressure and capillary penetration. Glycerol (10 %) raises viscosity; excessive thickness may impede arterial perfusion.

Emulsion stability

Concept: Ability of a mixed-phase fluid to resist separation.

Related terms: surfactant concentration, temperature.

Explanation: Maintaining stable emulsion ensures uniform distribution of additives. Stirring and temperature control are key.

Enzyme inactivation

Concept: Halting activity of lysosomal enzymes post-mortem.

Related terms: autolysis inhibition, aldehyde fixation.

Explanation: Aldehyde reacts with enzyme active sites, reducing tissue breakdown. Incomplete inactivation leads to localized autolysis.

Essential oil additives

Concept: Natural compounds added for scent or antimicrobial effect.

Related terms: eugenol, lavender oil.

Explanation: Small amounts (0.1-0.3 %) can mask formaldehyde odour and provide mild antimicrobial action. Potential for allergic reactions necessitates testing.

Ethylene glycol

Concept: Humectant sometimes incorporated to retain moisture.

Related terms: glycerol, hydrophilic additive.

Explanation: Improves tissue pliability. Concentrations above 5 % may cause excessive softness.

Exothermic reaction

Concept: Heat-producing chemical interaction during fluid preparation.

Related terms: aldehyde polymerisation, temperature control.

Explanation: Mixing formaldehyde with strong bases can release heat; cooling jackets prevent overheating.

Monitoring temperature safeguards product quality.

Formaldehyde

Concept: Most widely used aldehyde preservative.

Related terms: paraformaldehyde, glutaraldehyde.

Explanation: Acts by forming methylene bridges with tissue proteins. Typical concentration: 4-7 % v/v.

Health hazards include carcinogenicity; engineering controls mandatory.

Formaldehyde polymerisation

Concept: Conversion of monomeric formaldehyde to polymeric paraformaldehyde.

Related terms: paraformaldehyde, exothermic reaction.

Explanation: Polymerisation reduces active aldehyde concentration, diminishing preservative efficacy.

Adding stabilisers and maintaining low temperature limits this process.

Formaldehyde scavengers

Concept: Compounds that bind free formaldehyde to reduce vapour.

Related terms: amine buffers, hydroxylamine.

Explanation: Used in low-odor formulations. Example: 0.5 % hydroxylamine added to fluid. Must not interfere with fixation.

Fume extraction

Concept: Mechanical removal of vapours from work area.

Related terms: ventilation, local exhaust.

Explanation: Essential for controlling aldehyde levels. Systems should achieve at least 15 air changes per hour. Regular maintenance ensures effectiveness.

Glutaraldehyde

Concept: Dialdehyde offering stronger cross-linking than formaldehyde.

Related terms: aldehyde fixation, biocidal activity.

Explanation: Used at 2-4 % for high-level preservation; provides firmer tissue but can cause increased rigidity. Requires careful handling due to irritancy.

Hardening agents

Concept: Substances that increase tissue firmness post-embalming.

Related terms: aldehyde cross-linking, tissue rigidity.

Explanation: Sodium borate (0.5 %) can be added to promote firmness in extremities. Excess leads to brittle tissue.

Hemoglobin oxidation

Concept: Chemical alteration of blood pigment during preservation.

Related terms: methemoglobin formation, colour change.

Explanation: Aldehyde can oxidise hemoglobin, turning blood brown. Use of reducing agents (e.g., ascorbic acid 0.1 %) can maintain a natural red hue.

Hemostasis

Concept: Process of stopping blood flow.

Related terms: clotting agents, coagulation inhibition.

Explanation: Achieved through mechanical compression, topical agents, or anticoagulants in the fluid.

Proper hemostasis ensures uniform fluid distribution.

Hydration balance

Concept: Managing water content in embalmed tissues.

Related terms: dehydration control, humectant addition.

Explanation: Adding glycerol or propylene glycol (5-10 %) helps maintain tissue turgor. Monitoring is crucial for cosmetic outcomes.

Hydrophilic additive

Concept: Water-soluble component that modifies fluid properties.

Related terms: humectant, viscosity modifier.

Explanation: Examples include glycerol, propylene glycol. They increase fluid stability and improve tissue pliability.

Hydrophobic additive

Concept: Oil-soluble component incorporated for specific effects.

Related terms: essential oil additive, lipid solubiliser.

Explanation: Used to introduce fragrance or antimicrobial properties. Requires emulsification for uniform distribution.

Ice-cold injection

Concept: Performing arterial injection with chilled fluid ($\approx 4^{\circ}\text{C}$).

Related terms: cold-induced fixation, temperature control.

Explanation: Slows autolysis during perfusion, enhancing preservative penetration. Requires pre-chilling of fluid and insulated tubing.

Infection control

Concept: Preventing transmission of disease during embalming.

Related terms: PPE, disinfection protocol.

Explanation: Includes hand hygiene, use of barriers, and proper waste disposal. Regular audits ensure compliance.

Injection pressure monitoring

Concept: Real-time assessment of pressure during fluid delivery.

Related terms: arterial pressure, back-pressure valve.

Explanation: Digital pressure gauges provide feedback to avoid over-pressurisation. Alarms can be set at

50 mmHg.

Irreversible fixation

Concept: Permanent cross-linking that cannot be undone.

Related terms: aldehyde fixation, tissue rigidity.

Explanation: Achieved with high aldehyde concentrations; limits subsequent histological processing but provides long-term stability.

Isotonic solution

Concept: Fluid with osmolarity similar to body fluids ($\sim 300 \text{ mOsm L}^{-1}$).

Related terms: buffer system, humectant balance.

Explanation: Prevents cellular swelling or shrinkage during perfusion. Adjusted with salts such as NaCl.

Keratin preservation

Concept: Maintaining integrity of hair, nails, and skin.

Related terms: collagen cross-linking, hardening agents.

Explanation: Aldehyde penetrates keratin structures, stabilising them. Adding mild surfactants can aid penetration.

Kinetic stabiliser

Concept: Substance that slows chemical reactions in fluid.

Related terms: chemical stabiliser, exothermic reaction.

Explanation: Sodium metabisulphite (0.2%) reduces aldehyde polymerisation over time. Must be balanced to avoid excessive inhibition.

Latex gloves

Concept: Protective barrier for hands.

Related terms: PPE, chemical resistance.

Explanation: Recommended for routine handling; nitrile gloves preferred for aldehyde exposure due to superior resistance.

Lipid solubilisation

Concept: Dissolving lipophilic substances in fluid.

Related terms: emulsion stability, surfactant.

Explanation: Use of non-ionic surfactants (e.g., polysorbate 80) facilitates incorporation of essential oils. Over-use can destabilise fluid.

Low-odor formulation

Concept: Fluid designed to minimise formaldehyde smell.

Related terms: formaldehyde scavengers, essential oil additives.

Explanation: Combining aldehyde with scavengers and fragrance agents reduces odor to Magnesium sulfate

Concept: Salt added to adjust ionic strength.

Related terms: buffer capacity, osmolarity.

Explanation: 0.5% w/v improves fluid stability and can aid in tissue swelling control. Excess can cause tissue

hardening.

Maintenance of equipment

Concept: Regular servicing of pumps, filters, and storage tanks.

Related terms: disinfection protocol, fume extraction.

Explanation: Prevents contamination, ensures accurate pressure delivery, and prolongs equipment lifespan.

Scheduled monthly checks recommended.

Mass balance

Concept: Accounting for all fluid components during formulation.

Related terms: effective dosage, concentration calculation.

Explanation: Ensures final product meets specified percentages. Errors can lead to sub-optimal preservation or safety hazards.

Mechanical agitation

Concept: Stirring or shaking fluid to achieve homogeneity.

Related terms: emulsion stability, centrifugal separation.

Explanation: Use of magnetic stirrers at 200rpm for 10 minutes promotes uniform distribution of additives.

Over-agitation may introduce air bubbles.

Microbial load reduction

Concept: Decreasing number of viable microorganisms in fluid.

Related terms: biocidal activity, glutaraldehyde.

Explanation: Aldehyde concentration of 4 % typically reduces bacterial counts by >99.9 %. Additional disinfectants may be employed for high-risk cases.

Monomeric aldehyde

Concept: Single aldehyde molecules active in fixation.

Related terms: formaldehyde polymerisation, active preservative.

Explanation: Desired form for optimal cross-linking. Monitoring via spectrophotometry can assess monomer levels.

Mortuary ventilation

Concept: Airflow system designed to remove hazardous vapours.

Related terms: fume extraction, air exchange rate.

Explanation: Must achieve ≥ 12 air changes per hour; include carbon-filter units for aldehyde capture.

Regular testing ensures compliance with occupational standards.

Natural preservative research

Concept: Investigation of plant-derived compounds as alternatives.

Related terms: essential oil additives, arsenic compounds.

Explanation: Focus on antimicrobial efficacy and reduced toxicity. Current trials show limited fixation compared with aldehydes.

Neurovascular fixation

Concept: Preservation of brain and associated vessels.

Related terms: arterial injection, cerebral perfusion.

Explanation: Requires higher pressure (50-60 mmHg) and sometimes separate cranial injection to ensure adequate brain fixation. Over-pressurisation can cause edema.

Non-ionic surfactant

Concept: Surface-active agent without charge.

Related terms: emulsion stability, lipid solubilisation.

Explanation: Polysorbate 80 (0.5 %) aids incorporation of essential oils and improves fluid spread. Must be compatible with aldehyde chemistry.

Ocular preservation

Concept: Specific techniques for maintaining eye appearance.

Related terms: cavernous sinus embalming, corneal fixation.

Explanation: Injection of a low-viscosity fluid directly into the ophthalmic artery improves scleral clarity. Use of a gentle pressure (20 mmHg) prevents globe rupture.

Osmotic pressure

Concept: Force driving fluid movement across membranes.

Related terms: concentration gradient, isotonic solution.

Explanation: Balanced osmolarity avoids cellular swelling or shrinkage. Adjusted by adding salts or sugars.

Oxidation-reduction potential

Concept: Measure of a solution's tendency to gain or lose electrons.

Related terms: chemical stabiliser, formaldehyde scavengers.

Explanation: Maintaining a slightly reducing environment (– 100 mV) helps preserve aldehyde activity. Antioxidants such as sodium metabisulphite assist.

pH indicator

Concept: Substance that changes colour with pH variation.

Related terms: colorimetric indicator, buffer capacity.

Explanation: Phenol red (0.02 %) provides visual cue; red at pH 7–8, yellow below pH 6.5. Useful for quick quality checks.

Phenolic disinfectant

Concept: Antimicrobial agent containing phenol groups.

Related terms: disinfection protocol, surface decontamination.

Explanation: 0.5 % phenol solution used for equipment cleaning. Effective against a broad spectrum of microbes but corrosive to some metals.

Polyethylene glycol (PEG)

Concept: Polymer used as humectant and stabiliser.

Related terms: hydrophilic additive, viscosity modifier.

Explanation: PEG-400 (5 %) improves fluid retention and reduces tissue desiccation. High concentrations

may increase viscosity excessively.

Polymerisation inhibitor

Concept: Chemical that prevents monomer linking.

Related terms: kinetic stabiliser, exothermic reaction.

Explanation: Hydroquinone (0.05 %) added to formaldehyde solutions reduces polymerisation, maintaining active aldehyde levels.

Preservative synergy

Concept: Combined effect of multiple agents exceeding individual actions.

Related terms: glutaraldehyde, essential oil additives.

Explanation: Adding 0.2 % glutaraldehyde to a formaldehyde base can improve antimicrobial spectrum while lowering overall aldehyde concentration needed.

Preservative toxicity

Concept: Harmful effects of chemicals on human health.

Related terms: asphyxiant chemicals, PPE.

Explanation: Formaldehyde classified as a carcinogen; exposure limits set at 0.75 ppm (8-hour TWA). Strict adherence to safety protocols required.

Pressure-controlled pump

Concept: Device that maintains set injection pressure.

Related terms: back-pressure valve, injection pressure monitoring.

Explanation: Electronic pumps can be programmed to 35 mmHg with automatic shut-off. Calibration before each case ensures accuracy.

Procaine hydrochloride

Concept: Local anaesthetic sometimes added to reduce post-mortem stiffening.

Related terms: muscle relaxant, sedative additives.

Explanation: 0.5 % solution can soften muscle tissue, facilitating positioning. Must be balanced to avoid excessive tissue laxity.

Protein denaturation

Concept: Unfolding of protein secondary and tertiary structures.

Related terms: aldehyde fixation, thermal fixation.

Explanation: Aldehyde induces partial denaturation, exposing reactive groups for cross-linking.

Over-denaturation results in loss of tissue detail.

Propylene glycol

Concept: Humectant similar to glycerol.

Related terms: hydrophilic additive, viscosity modifier.

Explanation: 5 % addition helps retain moisture without significantly increasing viscosity. May impart a slight sweetness to fluid scent.

Purification of water

Concept: Removing contaminants from the aqueous component.

Related terms: distillation purification, filtration.

Explanation: Use of deionised water reduces mineral content that could affect buffer performance. Critical for high-purity formulations.

Quaternary ammonium compounds

Concept: Cationic disinfectants used in equipment cleaning.

Related terms: phenolic disinfectant, surface decontamination.

Explanation: 0.1 % benzalkonium chloride effective against enveloped viruses. Not suitable for direct addition to embalming fluid due to potential tissue staining.

Radiation safety

Concept: Protecting staff from ionising radiation when embalming radiologically examined bodies.

Related terms: protective shielding, dosimetry.

Explanation: Use lead aprons and monitor exposure with badge dosimeters. Not directly related to fluid chemistry but part of comprehensive practice.

Refrigerated storage

Concept: Keeping prepared fluid at low temperature to extend shelf life.

Related terms: cold-induced fixation, temperature control.

Explanation: Storing at 4 °C slows aldehyde degradation