Claims

1 An apparatus for rolling back the end of a flexible tube, the apparatus comprising

means for retaining the flexible tube; and

means for rolling back the end of the flexible tube, the means for rolling back the end of the flexible tube being configured to align with the means for retaining the flexible tube, the means for rolling back the end of the flexible tube comprising

a plunger having a conical end, a tip of the conical end being at the distal end of the plunger and flaring to a diameter that is the same or larger than that of the internal diameter of the flexible tube,

a cover configured to extend over the plunger and move with and separately to the plunger, wherein the cover is provided with an indent on its inner surface, the indent sized to attach a sleeve, the sleeve being sized to fit over a rolled back end of the flexible tube, and configured to secure the same; and

means for advancing the plunger and the cover towards the flexible tube.

2 The apparatus according to claim 1, where prior to use, the cover is configured to be positioned level with or slightly behind a proximal end of the conical end.

3 The apparatus according to claim 1 or claim 2, wherein the means for advancing the plunger and the cover towards the flexible tube is adapted to initially move the plunger and the cover together, and then to move the cover while retaining the position of the plunger with respect to the flexible tube.

4 The apparatus according to any preceding claim, wherein the means for retaining the flexible tube, and the means for rolling back the end of the flexible tube are configured to be fixed onto a base.

5 The apparatus according to any preceding claim, wherein the means for advancing the plunger and the cover is manually operated.

6 The apparatus according to any one of claims 1 - 4, wherein the means for advancing the plunger and the cover is automated.

7 The apparatus according to any preceding claim, wherein the conical end of the plunger assembly and the cover are configured to be replaceable by alternatives of different sizes.

8 The apparatus according to any preceding claim, wherein the conical end flares outwardly with increasing flare from its tip to its widest point where it meets a stem of the plunger.

9 The apparatus according to any preceding claim, wherein the cover is an open cylinder.

10 The apparatus according to any preceding claims, wherein the length of the rolled back end is between 80 – 120% of the external diameter of the flexible tube.

11 A kit comprising the apparatus of any one of claims 1 – 10, together with a plurality of sleeves, sized for an interference fit with a length of the rolled back end.

12 A method of providing a rolled back end of a flexible tube and supporting the rolled back end with a sleeve, the method comprising the steps of

supporting a length of the flexible tube,

inserting a conical portion into the end of the tube, until the tube extends beyond the conical portion, creating a flared end, and

pushing the flared end back on itself using the sleeve held by a cover extending over the flared conical portion, resulting in a rolled back end of a flexible tube supported by the sleeve.

13 The method according to claim 12, comprising an additional step of

initially fitting a tubing support adjacent the end of the flexible tube, spaced from the end by the length of tubing to be rolled back.

14 The method according to claim 13, further comprising a final step of

pushing the sleeve over the rolled back end to engage with a tubing support.

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15 The method according to any one of claims 12 - 14 using the apparatus of any of claims 1 – 10.