

"Connector for medical lines"

Field of the invention

The present invention relates to connectors for
5 medical lines of the type comprising a tubular body
having a male luer-lock fitting at one end, including
an inner tubular element and an innerly threaded outer
hollow element intended to be screw-coupled with a
complementary female fitting.

10 State of the prior art

In connectors of the type defined above, when the
male fitting is coupled and screwed to the
complementary female fitting, there is the risk that
the two fittings can become unscrewed and separated
15 from each other accidentally, or due to a wrong
manoeuvre, which may lead to the loss of fluids, and
consequently to possible critical risks for the patient
to whom the medical line with the connector is
connected, when in use.

20 One solution to this problem, proposed by the
Applicant in the European patent application no.
13150798.1 (unpublished at the priority date of the
present application), consists of providing the
connector with an outer jacket, coupled in
25 unidirectional rotation with the tubular body in the
direction corresponding to the screwing of the male
fitting relative to the complementary female fitting,
and freely rotatable in the opposite direction
corresponding to the unscrewing of the male fitting. In
30 this solution, the tubular body and the outer jacket
are mutually axially displaceable, against the action
of elastic contrast means, from the position in which
they are rotationally coupled together in the screwing
direction of the male fitting, to a position in which
35 the torsional mutual coupling means rotationally couple

the jacket and the tubular body in the direction corresponding to the unscrewing of the male fitting.

As far as this solution is entirely suitable for effectively solving the problem mentioned above, the intervention of these torsional coupling means, which requires mutual axial displacement between the outer jacket and the tubular body, can result in being unintuitive for the operator and sometimes inconvenient or difficult.

10 Summary of the invention

The present invention aims to resolve the aforesaid technical problem, and particularly aims to render the operation of the aforesaid torsional coupling means more immediate and straightforward, said means allowing the unscrewing of the male fitting of the connector ensuring, at the same time, a high degree of safety against the effects of the risk of erroneous or accidental unscrewing.

20 According to the invention, this object is achieved thanks to a connector as defined in claim 1.

Thanks to this solution idea, the voluntary operation that allows the unscrewing of the connector does not require any mutual axial translation between the outer jacket and the tubular body of the connector, but is produced in a more simple, intuitive and immediate manner through the operation of the side push-button.

The side push-button is conveniently provided with an engagement tooth, and the tubular body is externally provided with at least one striker tooth. The side push-button is essentially radially displaceable with respect to the outer jacket between a stable, inoperative position and an unstable operative position in which the engagement tooth interacts with the striker tooth.

The push-button advantageously consists of an elastically deformable element, integrally formed with the outer jacket, and bearing the said engagement tooth at its free end.

5 To additionally render this manoeuvre even more convenient and straightforward, the connector according to the invention conveniently comprises a pair of diametrically opposite side push-buttons, which cooperate with a pair of diametrically opposite
10 respective striker teeth of the tubular body.

The connector according to the invention can be advantageously used in multiple applications, such as for a needle point: in this case, a resilient body, adapted to be pierced by a needle or passed-through by
15 a cannula, is fitted at the end of the tubular body, opposite to said male fitting.

Brief description of the drawings

The invention will now be described in detail with reference to the accompanying drawings, provided purely
20 by way of non-limiting example, in which:

Figure 1 is a schematic perspective view of a connector for medical lines, which forms an embodiment of the invention,

Figure 2 is a side elevational view of the
25 connector,

Figure 3 is an axial section view along the line III-III of Figure 2,

Figure 4 is a cross sectional view along the line IV-IV of Figure 2, and

30 Figure 5 is a cross sectional view along the line V-V of Figure 2.

Detailed description of the invention

The connector for medical lines represented in the example relates to a needle point ("injection site"):
35 however, the invention is applicable to a multiplicity

of connectors of different types having diverse functions.

Referring to the drawings, the connector comprises a tubular body 1 formed with a male luer-lock fitting 2 at one end, including an inner tubular element 3 with a slightly conical outer surface, and an innerly threaded hollow element 4 intended to be screw-coupled with a complementary female luer-lock fitting.

Numerical 5 indicates an outer jacket that coaxially covers the tubular body 2 for almost its entire length and is coupled thereto in unidirectional rotation in the direction corresponding to the screwing of the male luer-lock fitting 2, while normally it is freely rotatable in the opposite direction, corresponding to the unscrewing.

For rotational coupling in the screwing direction, the outer jacket 5 is internally provided with a crown of ratchet teeth 6, integrally formed by moulding, and elastically springing, cooperating with a crown of engagement teeth 7 formed on the outer surface of the outer hollow element of the male fitting 2. In the screwing direction, the ratchet teeth 6 engage with the engagement teeth 7 so that the outer jacket 5 rotates the tubular body 1, while in the opposite direction, the ratchet teeth 6 elastically jump above the engagement teeth 7, so that the rotation of the outer jacket 5 does not produce any rotation of the tubular body 1. This avoids accidental or erroneous unscrewing of the male luer-lock fitting 2, during use, from the complementary female connector fitting to which the connector is coupled.

To allow, however, the voluntary unscrewing of the connector, the invention provides a manually operable torsional coupling system, in order to also couple the outer jacket 5 with the tubular body 1 in the direction

corresponding to the unscrewing of the male luer-lock fitting 2.

This coupling system comprises at least one side push-button, and preferably two diametrically opposite side push-buttons, indicated with 8, integrally formed with the outer jacket 5 at its respective windows. Each push-button 8 has an engagement tooth 9 at its free end, and is essentially radially displaceable with respect to the jacket 5, between a stable inoperative position (represented in Figure 4) and an unstable operative position in which the respective end tooth 9 engages a corresponding striker tooth 10 formed outside the tubular body 1, at the rear of the male luer-lock fitting 2. The displacement from the inoperative position to the operative one requires a manually-applied pressure to the two side push-buttons 8, the release of which produces the elastic return to the inoperative position.

As is evident in Figure 4, the striker teeth 10 are formed from end walls at an acute angle with a pair of contrasting recesses 11 of the tubular body 1, the opposite ends 12 of which are at an obtuse angle.

The outer jacket 5, with the ratchet teeth 6 and the push-buttons 8 and the relative engagement teeth 9, is conveniently formed by two identical half-shells 5a, 5b, coupled to each other on the tubular body 1, and joined by their respective irreversible snap-fit coupling means 13.

As already revealed, the connector described here by way of non-limiting example, is configured to form a needle point: to this effect, a resilient body 14, adapted to be pierced by a needle or passed-through by a cannula, is inserted and axially locked within the ends of the tubular body 1 opposite to the male luer-lock fitting 2.

Of course, the details of construction and the embodiments may vary widely with respect to those described and illustrated, without departing from the scope of the present invention as defined in the
5 following claims.

CLAIMS

1. A connector for medical lines, comprising a tubular body (1) having a male luer-lock fitting (2) at one end, including an inner tubular element (3) and an innerly threaded outer hollow element (4) intended to be screw-coupled with a complementary female fitting, characterized in that it includes an outer jacket (5) coupled in unidirectional rotation with the tubular body (1) in the direction corresponding to the screwing of said male fitting (2) and freely rotatable in the opposite direction, and manually operable torsional coupling means (9, 10) to selectively couple said outer jacket (5) with the tubular body (1) in the direction corresponding to the unscrewing of said male fitting (2); at least one side push-button (8) carried by said outer jacket (5) being provided for operating said torsional coupling means (9, 10).

2. A connector according to claim 1, characterized in that said at least one side push-button (8) is provided with an engagement tooth (9) and said tubular body (1) is provided externally with at least one striker tooth (10), said side push-button (8) essentially being radially displaceable between a stable inoperative position and an unstable operative position wherein said engagement tooth (9) interacts with said striker tooth (10).

3. A connector according to claim 2, characterized in that said at least one side push-button (8) consists of an elastically deformable element integrally formed with the outer jacket (5) and bearing said engagement tooth (9) at its free end.

4. A connector according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that it comprises a pair of side push-buttons (8), diametrically opposite

to each other.

5 5. A connector according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that said outer hollow element (4) of the male fitting (2) is provided externally with a crown of engagement teeth (7) co-operating with a crown of springing ratchet teeth (6) provided internally of said outer jacket (5) for the mutual unidirectional rotational coupling in the direction corresponding to the screwing of said male
10 fitting (2).

6. A connector according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that said outer jacket (5) is formed by two half-shells (5a, 5b) mutually joined on said tubular body (1).

15 7. A connector according to claim 6, characterized in that said two half-shells (5a, 5b) are mutually joined by snap-fit coupling means (13).

20 8. A connector according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that a resilient body (14), adapted to be pierced by a needle or passed-through by a cannula, is inserted into the end of said tubular body (1) opposite to said male fitting (2).