

Device for the transfer of a medium

5 The present invention concerns the transfer of media, such as liquids, into or from a container.

 It is especially important, in particular in the field of pharmaceuticals and biotechnologies, to be able to take off samples to analyze them, for example to perform microbiological verifications in culture tanks, for counting
10 cells, for chemical analysis, etc.

 Such taking off must be performed while minimizing as much as possible the risks of contamination of the taken-off sample and of the medium from which the sample is taken off.

 A device is already known, in particular from the United States patent
15 US 7,293,477, for the transfer of a medium into or from a container comprising a magazine having two main faces of which one is adapted to cooperate with the container and a lateral face extending between the main faces as well as several sliding valves housed in cavities of the magazine. In each valve there is formed a duct for transfer of the medium which issues at the face cooperating
20 with the container, each valve having a closed position in which it sealingly isolates that duct from the container and an open position in which that duct is placed in communication with the container.

 Each duct also communicates via an end-piece and a flexible tube with a bag for transferring the medium from the container to the bag.

25 To make each valve pass from its closed position to its open position, the operator presses on a tab of that valve to unlock it from the magazine and make it slide along a portion made of elastomer of that magazine in order for it to occupy its open position. In this position, the end portion of the valve projects within the container, so placing the duct of that valve in communication with the
30 container. To pass the valve back to its closed position, the operator pulls on it to make it slide in the opposite direction.

The invention aims to provide a device that is also adapted to enable the transfer of a medium, but more economically, more practically, and with better performance.

To that end it provides a device for the transfer of a medium into or
5 from a container comprising a magazine having two main faces of which one is adapted to cooperate with said container and a lateral face extending between said main faces as well as at least one sliding valve housed in a cavity of said magazine and in which there is formed a transfer duct for said medium which
10 issues on said face adapted to cooperate with said container, said valve having a closed position in which it sealingly isolates said duct from said container and an open position in which said duct is placed in communication with said container; characterized in that said valve comprises a valve member, an isolation sleeve surrounding at least partially said valve member as well as spring means adapted to be compressed by said valve member when said
15 valve is in its open position.

In the device according to the invention, the sleeve (providing sealing with the magazine) and valve member (opening or closing the valve) arrangement makes it possible in particular to obtain better sealing than in the device of the prior art.

20 This is because in the device of the prior art the sealing with the magazine is provided by a part moving in sliding translation (the body of the sliding valve) whereas in the device according to the invention these two functions are dissociated, the only function of the valve member being to open or close the valve whereas sealing with the magazine is provided by the non-
25 moving isolation sleeve which ensures sealing of better quality (less risk of leakages between the valve and the magazine) since the surfaces of the sleeve are in non-sliding contact with the magazine.

Furthermore, the fact that spring means are provided for the valve with those spring means being compressed when the valve is open enables the
30 valve to be held in its closed position until it is actuated and to dispense with the locking means of the prior art device which enables the dimensions of such a device to be minimized and to free considerable space in which to place, in a

magazine of the same diameter as that of the prior art device, more valves (so increasing the number points for take-off from the container).

Lastly, the presence of spring means enables automatic return of the valve to its closed position without additional manipulation once the transfer has been carried out which not only makes such a device more sure but also gives it better performance.

It is to be noted that still other types of transfer devices exist comprising a magazine, such as the device described in European patent EP 0 858 589, such devices having a needle intended for perforating a septum. The device according to the invention enables such needles to be dispensed with and thus also makes that device simpler, more ergonomic and cheaper.

According to features that are preferred for reasons of simplicity and convenience for both manufacture and use, said duct also issues on said lateral face.

The issuing of the transfer duct on the lateral surface of the magazine, that is to say radially relative to the direction of sliding of the valve member in the sleeve, makes it possible to leave free the opposite face of the magazine to that which cooperates with the container to thereby have easy access to the valve member in order to be able to actuate it and make the valve pass from its closed position to its open position.

The exploitation of the lateral surface of the magazine to form the outlet from the duct also contributes to making such a device more compact by optimizing the set of available useful surfaces.

According to still other preferred features, said cavity is open at the opposite main face to that adapted to cooperate with said container.

This opening thus directly gives access to the valve member so making its actuation simple and easy.

According to still other preferred features, said sleeve comprises at least one elastically deformable portion forming said spring means.

By fulfilling the spring function, the elastically deformable portion of the sleeve makes it possible to greatly simplify the manufacture and reliability of

such a device since it is not necessary to add another component to the valve to provide the elastic return of the valve member to the closed position.

According to still other preferred features:

- in said closed position of the valve, a space is present between
5 said magazine and said elastically deformable portion of said sleeve, said space being at least partially occupied by that portion in its compressed state when the valve is in its open position.

- said valve member has a head in sealing contact with said sleeve
10 in the closed position and away from said sleeve in the open position, a shank and a body linked to the opposite end of the shank to that linked to the head; and/or

- the body of said valve member is in abutment with said spring
means in said open position and, on the opposite end to said surface in abutment with said spring means, has an actuating surface for passing said
15 valve from its closed position to its open position.

According to still other preferred features, said shank has a portion in sealing contact with said sleeve and a portion without contact with said sleeve.

The presence of a valve member portion in contact with the sleeve and a portion without contact makes it possible not only to provide sealing
20 between the valve member and the sleeve but also to leave a space between that valve member and that sleeve to form a part of the transfer duct for the medium.

According to still other preferred features:

- the device also comprises means for actuating said valve to make
25 it pass from its closed position to its open position;

- said actuating means are adapted to hold said valve in its open position;

- said actuating means are rotatably mounted on said magazine;

- said actuating means comprise a manipulating wheel provided
30 with a nipple for actuating said valve,

- said nipple has a curved surface and a flat surface.

- said magazine has indexing means and said manipulating wheel has complementary indexing means adapted to index said manipulating wheel relative to said magazine in a position in which said nipple presses against said valve member and in a position in which it is away from said valve member;

5 - said actuating means comprise a projection movable in a track formed in a wall of said magazine, a rotatably mounted ring on said magazine adapted to drive the movement of said projection in said track to place it facing said valve member to actuate, as well as a button adapted to actuate said valve member via said projection; and/or

10 - said magazine comprises several cavities in each of which is accommodated a corresponding valve, said cavities being disposed around the center of said magazine.

The features and advantages of the invention will appear from the following description, given by way of preferred and non-limiting example, with
15 reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

- Figures 1 and 2 are two perspective views taken from different angles of a device according to the invention and on which the nine valves which it comprises are represented in their closed position;

- Figure 3 is a view in elevation of that device;

20 - Figure 4 is an exploded view in perspective of that device;

- Figure 5 is a cross-section view in elevation of that device taken on line V-V of Figure 3 in which the valve which is in cross-section is represented in its closed position;

25 - Figure 6 is a similar view to Figure 5, but in which that valve is represented in its open position;

- Figures 7 to 9 are respectively a view in perspective, a plan view taken from below and a cross-section view in elevation on line IX-IX of Figure 8 illustrating an actuating manipulating wheel that this device comprises;

30 - Figure 10 is a cross-section view in elevation of that device fixed to the wall of a container to which a take-off bag is connected;

- Figure 11 is a perspective view of second embodiment of the device according to the invention;

- Figure 12 is a similar view to Figure 11, but for which some parts of the device have not been shown; and

- Figure 13 is an elevation view of that device in cross-section along a median plane of symmetry.

5 The transfer device 1 illustrated in Figures 1 to 6 comprises a magazine 2, nine valves 3, an actuating manipulating wheel 4 as well as an indexing finger 5 (Figure 4).

As illustrated in Figure 10, this device 1 is to be assembled (for example by screwing or latching) via a seal 7 to a coupling 8 which is formed on
10 the wall 9 of a container 10 and in which an opening (not visible) is formed to enable each of the nine valves of the magazine to be place in communication with the inside of the container.

Each valve is also associated with a bag 72 provided to receive the medium coming from the container (for example a liquid), each bag being
15 connected the magazine 2 by a tube 71.

The magazine 2 of the transfer curve comprises a body 15 having two main faces 16 and 17 (Figure 4) and a lateral face 18 linking said main faces together.

The body 15 is of plastics material and has a general form that is
20 cylindrical with the exception of a recess 19 separating on one side a collar 20 which delimits the face 17 and which is adapted to cooperate with the coupling 8 of the container and a cylindrical portion 21 adapted to cooperate with the manipulating wheel 4.

In the body there are formed a central cavity 25, nine lateral cavities
25 26 disposed side by side in a circle, concentrically about the cavity 25 and approximately half way between the center of the magazine and its periphery, as well as a cavity 27 situated at the edge of that body.

Cavity 25 (and respectively 27) only issues at face 16, by an opening
30 (and respectively 31).

Each cavity 26 issues from face 16 by an opening 32, from face 17
by an opening 33 (Figure 2) and from the lateral face by an opening 34.

As illustrated in Figures 5 and 6, each cavity 26 is delimited by a first hollow portion 35, a second hollow portion 36 of smaller inside diameter than the inside diameter of the first portion 35 and a hollow portion 37 extending in the direction of face 17 and flaring as it does so.

5 Each valve comprises a valve member 40 and a sealing sleeve 41.

The valve member is of thermoplastics material and the sleeve is formed from an elastomer material, that is to say that it is elastically deformable and enables sealing to be provided both with the valve member 40 and with the magazine 2.

10 The valve member 40 comprises a body 42, a shank 43 and a head 44.

The body 42 is a solid bar of outside diameter substantially equal to the inside diameter of portion 35 of the cavity and, at its top, at the opposite end from the head 44, comprises a bowl-shaped recess 45 adapted to receive, as
15 will be seen below, an actuating nipple comprised by the manipulating wheel.

Shank 43 comprises a first cylindrical portion 47, a second cylindrical portion 48 of smaller diameter than the diameter of portion 47 and attached to that first portion at the opposite end to the body 42.

20 Lastly, the head is in the form of a frusto-conical collar and connects to the cylindrical portion 48 at the opposite end to portion 47.

The sleeve 41 comprises a first tubular portion 50 and a flared portion 51 respectively espousing the inside surface of the hollow portion 36 of the magazine and that of the flared portion 37.

25 The tubular portion 50 of the sleeve comprises an opening 52 provided approximately half way between its edges.

30 This sleeve is engaged in the corresponding cavity 26 of the magazine with the conical portion 51 coming into abutment against the conical portion 37 of the magazine and the tubular portion 50 accommodating in the hollow portion 36 of the cavity with a part 58 of that tubular portion projecting from that cavity inside the hollow portion 35, such that there is play 55 between that portion 58 and the portion 35 of the magazine (Figure 5), that play, as will

be seen below, enabling the dilation of that portion of the sleeve 41 when the sleeve is compressed.

Once the sleeve has been engaged, the opening 52 of that sleeve is situated facing the corresponding opening 34 of the magazine (Figures 5 and 6).

In addition to sealing with the head 44 of the valve member, the sleeve 41 also provides sealing with the tubular portion 47 of that valve member as well as the sealing with portion 36 of the magazine 2.

The valve member 40 accommodates in the sleeve with the body 42 being disposed against the edge of part 58 of the tubular portion 50. Portion 47 of the shank 43 is in sealing contact with portion 50 at its part 58 whereas portion 48 is away from portion 50 within the latter, such that it delimits a space with that portion 50 enabling the passage of the medium to transfer.

Cavity 26, valve member 40 and sleeve 41 thus delimit a duct 59 (Figures 5 and 6) extending from the opening 33 to the opening 34 of the magazine 2 and comprising the space situated between the sleeve 41 and the portion 48 of the valve member as well as the space situated between the opening 52 of the sleeve and the opening 34 of the magazine.

In the closed position of each valve 3 illustrated in Figure 5, the head 44 comes to bear against the flared portion 51 of the sleeve 50 itself bearing against the magazine so as to provide the sealed isolation of the duct 59 with the container.

In this position, the surface of the head 44 turned towards the container is situated at the same level as the surface 17 of the magazine (which in particular makes it possible not to have any obstacle in the vicinity of the opening 33 and thus no risk of having liquid stagnating in the vicinity of that opening, the taking-off from the container then risking not being representative).

In the open position of the valve 3 illustrated in Figure 6, the head 44 of the valve member is away from the flared portion 51 of the sleeve and projects within the container, so enabling the medium to be transferred to enter the duct 59 by the opening 33 between the head 44 of the valve member and the portion 51 of the sleeve to exit that duct by the opening 34.

The finger 5 illustrated in Figure 4 comprises a cylindrical portion 56 and a conical portion 57 and accommodates in the cavity 27 of the magazine, a spring being disposed at the innermost end of that cavity (not shown on the drawings).

5 The manipulating wheel 4 is described next with reference to Figures 7 to 9.

This manipulating wheel 4 comprises a back 60 and a collar 61 radially surrounding that wall, a journal 62 and actuating nipple 63.

10 This manipulating wheel also comprises an annular rib 70, projecting from the back wall on the same side as the collar 61, in which there are formed eighteen regularly spaced blind indexing holes 69.

The collar 61 comprises nine wall segments 68 linked together and each comprising an outwardly directed concave face 64 facilitating the grasping of that manipulating wheel by the fingers of the operator.

15 The nipple 63 has a curved surface 65 and a flat surface 66.

The manipulating wheel 4 is disposed against the face 16 of the magazine 2 with the journal 62 being engaged in the central accommodation 25 of that magazine such that the manipulating wheel is mounted to rotate on that magazine.

20 The eighteen blind holes are each provided to receive the cone 57 of the finger 5, those eighteen holes thus corresponding to the same number of relative indexing positions of the manipulating wheel relative to the magazine.

25 In nine of those indexing positions, the nipple 63 bears against a valve member 42, such that the corresponding valve is open. In the other nine positions, termed waiting positions, the nipple 63 is situated between two valve members 42 such that all the valves are closed, those positions alternating with the nine positions in which one of the valves is open.

30 Rotating the manipulating wheel thus makes it possible to alternate the positions in which the valves are open one after the other and the positions in which all of those valves are closed, so isolating all the ducts 59 of the magazine from the inside of the container.

Due to its simplicity, the device 1 is obtained by simple molding of all the members that constitute it, it thus being possible for the device to be a single-use (disposable) device for reasonable cost.

This device can withstand strong operating pressure of the order of
5 one bar or even more.

A description will now be given of how to perform a take-off operation from a medium, such as liquid, inside a container, in particular with reference to Figures 5, 6 and 10.

Prior to the taking-off operations, the device 1 is sealingly fixed to the
10 coupling of the container as illustrated in Figure 10, with the finger 5 being indexed in a hole 69 corresponding to one of the nine positions in which all the valves are closed.

To perform a take-off operation into one of the bags 72 (Figure 10), the operator acts on the manipulating wheel and turns it clockwise. During this
15 rotation, the rib 70 exerts a force on the cone 57 of the indexing finger such that the finger is thrust into its cavity 27 so concealing the hole 69 in which it was housed to enable the manipulating wheel to turn.

The operator continues to turn the manipulating wheel 4 until the indexing finger 5 comes to be accommodated in the neighboring blind hole 69
20 by elastic return of the spring (not shown).

During the movement, the curved surface 65 of the nipple 63 encounters the body 42 of one of the valve members and comes to press thereon for it to slide until the nipple is accommodated in the recess 45 of the body 42 (Figure 6).

25 The curved surface 65 of the nipple and that of the head 42 facilitate the engagement of that nipple in the recess 45.

In this position the first of the nine valves 3 is then open so enabling the liquid to flow through the duct 59 of that valve then through the tube 71 connected to the opening 34 of that duct 59 until it reaches the bag 72 (Figure
30 10).

In this position, the body 42 of the valve member is in abutment and bears against the edge of part 58 of the sleeve 41 such that this part of the

sleeve is compressed and has a slightly convex shape thereby occupying a large part of the space 55 which was left free between it and the magazine adjacent portion 55 when that sleeve was at rest (not compressed).

When the operator passes to the following position and thus
5 separates the nipple 63 from that valve member, this compression enables the natural return of the valve member to its initial position (closed position) by elastic return of that part 58 of the sleeve.

Once the bag 72 attached to that valve is sufficiently filled, the operator thus again turns the manipulating wheel 4 in the same direction as
10 earlier until the cone 57 of the finger 5 is disposed in the next blind hole 69, corresponding to one of the nine positions in which the nipple 63 is disposed between two valve members, all the valves then being in their closed position, which makes it possible to wait before performing the next take-off operation without any valve remaining open.

15 With the device illustrated here it is thus possible to perform nine take-off operations successively with, between each take-off operation, a position in which all the valves are closed.

After the filling of each bag, it is possible to retrieve that bag using a tool (not illustrated) adapted to cut out all while obturating the tube 71 (for
20 example by heating).

If, when the manipulating wheel is indexed to a waiting position, the operator were to act on the manipulating wheel in the opposite direction, the flat surface 66 of the nipple 63 would come into abutment against the body 42 of the valve member to prevent the manipulating wheel from turning further, such
25 that it is made impossible to open a valve again that had already been opened previously, this being to avoid any risk of having the different samples of liquid taken off contaminated by each other.

Nothing however prevents the return from a position in which a valve is open to the preceding waiting position since the nipple 63 does not come into
30 abutment against a valve member in that case, which thus makes it possible to perform several successive take-off operations by the same valve and to close that valve between each take-off operation.

An end of travel abutment rib (not illustrated in the drawings) is also present to prevent turning the manipulating wheel further once all the valves have been opened, so as not to open the first of those valves again by turning the manipulating wheel in the same direction as previously.

5 Another embodiment of the transfer device is illustrated in Figures 11 to 13.

Generally, for similar members the same references have been used, to which the number 100 has been added.

10 The transfer device 101 comprises a magazine 102, a ring 104 and an actuating button 106.

This device also comprises a moveable projection 163 within a track of closed outline 167 delimited by the upper portion of the magazine 102 (Figure 12). This moveable projection 163 cooperates with the ring 104 such that, when the operator causes that ring to turn, the ring acts directly on the projection 163
15 and causes it to move within the track in order for that projection to be disposed facing one of the valve members 140 to actuate.

That ring 104 also comprises indexing means (not visible) and the magazine comprises complementary indexing means (also not visible) to index the projection 163 when facing each valve member 140.

20 When the projection 163 faces the desired valve member, the operator presses on the push button 106 in order to bear on the projection 163 via a plate 111 in order for that projection to cause the corresponding valve member to slide towards face 117 and to compress the sleeve 141 while at the same time separating the head of that valve member from its sleeve so as to
25 place the inside of the duct 159 of that valve in communication with the enclosed space from which it is desired to take off a sample.

In another embodiment not illustrated, each valve 3 of the device is connected by a flexible tube not to a single bag but to several bags arranged in series, those bags filling successively during the transfer of the liquid until that
30 liquid occupies the last bag which serves as a filling indicator indicating to the operator that all the preceding bags have been filled and that he may close the valve.

In another embodiment not illustrated, the spring-forming portion 58 of the sleeve is replaced by any other type of spring means such as a spiral spring, the valve member possibly being surrounded by an 'O' ring to isolate the spring from the medium to transfer.

5 In still another embodiment not illustrated, the device has more or fewer than nine take-off points by varying the diameter of the magazine or not.

In still another embodiment not illustrated, the device lacks actuating means such as a manipulating wheel and the access to the valve member is left free at face 16 to enable the operator to act directly thereon.

10 Such devices are usable for other media than liquid media, such as a gas to take off for analysis or for any other type of fluid medium.

It is also to be noted that the device according to the invention makes it possible to perform the transfer of a medium not necessarily from the container to the bags but also, for example, from a bag pre-filled with medium to
15 a container.

The device according to the invention is also intended for transferring a medium into or from any type of container other than a tank, such as containers with flexible walls such as a bag or a pipe, a connector being mounted on those containers adapted to cooperate with a magazine.

20 The present invention is not limited to the embodiments described and represented but encompasses any variant form thereof.

CLAIMS

1. A device for the transfer of a medium into or from a container (10) comprising a magazine (2 ; 102) having two main faces (16, 17 ; 116, 117) of which one is adapted to cooperate with said container (10) and a lateral face (18 ; 118) extending between said main faces (16, 17 ; 116, 117) as well as at least one sliding valve (3 ; 103) housed in a cavity (26) of said magazine (2 ; 102) and in which there is formed a transfer duct (59 ; 159) for said medium which issues on said face (17 ; 117) adapted to cooperate with said container (10), said valve (3 ; 103) having a closed position in which it sealingly isolates said duct (59 ; 159) from said container (10) and an open position in which said duct (59 ; 159) is placed in communication with said container (10); characterized in that said valve (3 ; 103) comprises a valve member (40 ; 140), an isolation sleeve (41 ; 141) surrounding at least partially said valve member (40 ; 140) as well as spring means (58 ; 158) adapted to be compressed by said valve member (40 ; 140) when said valve (3 ; 103) is in its open position.

2. A device according to claim 1, characterized in that said duct (59 ; 159) also issues on said lateral face (18 ; 118).

3. A device according to any one of claims 1 or 2, characterized in that said cavity (26) is open at the opposite main face (16 ; 116) to that (17 ; 117) adapted to cooperate with said container (10).

4. A device according to any one of claims 1 to 3, characterized in that said sleeve (41 ; 141) comprises at least one elastically deformable portion (58 ; 158) forming said spring means.

5. A device according to claim 4, characterized in that, in said closed position of the valve (3), a space (55) is present between said magazine (2) and said elastically deformable portion (58) of said sleeve (41), said space (55) being at least partially occupied by that portion (58) in its compressed state when the valve (3) is in its open position.

6. A device according to any one of claims 1 to 5, characterized in that said valve member (40) has a head (44) in sealing contact with said sleeve (41) in the closed position and away from said sleeve (41) in the open position,

a shank (43) and a body (42) linked to the opposite end of the shank (43) to that linked to the head (44).

7. A device according to claim 6, characterized in that the body (42) of said valve member (40) is in abutment with said spring means (58) in
5 said open position and, on the opposite end to said surface in abutment with said spring means (58), has an actuating surface (45) for passing said valve (3) from its closed position to its open position.

8. A device according to any one of claims 6 or 7, characterized in that said shank (43) has a portion (47) in sealing contact with said sleeve (41)
10 and a portion (48) without contact with said sleeve (41).

9. A device according to any one of claims 1 to 8, characterized in that it also comprises means (4, 63 ; 104, 106, 163) for actuating said valve (3 ; 103) to make it pass from its closed position to its open position.

10. A device according to claim 9, characterized in that said
15 actuating means (4, 63) are adapted to hold said valve (3) in its open position.

11. A device according to any one of claims 9 or 10, characterized in that said actuating means (4, 63) are rotatably mounted on said magazine (2).

12. A device according to claim 11, characterized in that said
20 actuating means comprise a manipulating wheel (4) provided with a nipple (63) for actuating said valve (3).

13. A device according to claim 12, characterized in that said nipple (63) has a curved surface (65) and a flat surface (66).

14. A device according to any one of claims 12 or 13, characterized
25 in that said magazine (2) has indexing means (5, 27) and said manipulating wheel (4) has complementary indexing means (69, 70) adapted to index said manipulating wheel (4) relative to said magazine (2) in a position in which said nipple (63) presses against said valve member (40) and in a position in which it is away from said valve member (40).

30 15. A device according to claim 9, characterized in that said actuating means (104, 106, 163) comprise a projection (163) movable in a track (167) formed in a wall of said magazine (102), a rotatably mounted ring (104) on

said magazine (102) adapted to drive the movement of said projection (163) in said track (167) to place it facing said valve member (40) to actuate, as well as a button (106) adapted to actuate said valve member (40) via said projection (163).

- 5 16. A device according to any one of claims 1 to 15, characterized in that said magazine (2 ; 102) comprises several cavities (26) in each of which is accommodated a corresponding valve (3 ; 103), said cavities (26) being disposed around the center of said magazine (2 ; 102).