

# A new surgical tool -- the IKEA pencil

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IKEA pencils are better at marking out cuts in the bone for facial and head surgery than traditional felt tipped pens, say two surgeons in the Christmas issue published in the British Medical Journal today.

Karen Eley, from the Nuffield Department of Surgical Sciences at the University of Oxford, and Stephen Watt-Smith, from the Department of Maxillofacial Surgery at the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford, say that while the popularity of the IKEA [pencil](#) is widely known - there is a Facebook page called “Ikea pencil stealing appreciation” – sourcing pencils from IKEA for surgery has surprised doctors.

They say “as popular as these little pencils are, we were still surprised to be handed one halfway through a surgical case ... the use of a pencil to mark osteotomy cuts in craniofacial and maxillofacial [surgery](#) is well established, proving superior to methylene, Bonney’s blue and felt tipped skin markers that struggle to transfer an ink mark to bone, or are washed away by irrigation or tissue fluids”.

Unfortunately, they say, repeated sterilisation means that some of the pencils split but even this problem has been overcome by wrapping silicon cuffs around the pencil.

Perhaps the designers at IKEA could act on this idea, suggest the authors.

Provided by British Medical Journal

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