

## Backyard Docs and Body Shops

Adventurers in trouble might not have the option of seeking legitimate medical help – often because they're short on cash or wish to avoid trouble with the authorities. Enter the "backyard doc." This might be an unlicensed dentist operating out of a filthy tenement and preying on the poor . . . or a hotshot surgeon treating celebrities at a private mountain resort. Costs can run from cut-rate to exorbitant; quality, from first-class to quackery.

The best backyard doc is an able former professional with a troubled background. Perhaps he lost his license after a messy court battle, or was set up by a vindictive employee. Maybe he's an immigrant whose foreign credentials aren't officially recognized. He probably has a white-collar day job – but on the side he runs a tidy little medical practice, doing favors for licensed doctors in exchange for equipment and supplies, and providing services to those in the know at 10% of the going rate. He's likely to have clean facilities and modern tools, but a limited supply of drugs. He might even have a key to a licensed doctor friend's clinic in case some serious need crops up. It's estimated that *thousands* of unlicensed doctors operate such businesses in the U.S., avoiding taxes and regulation, and gaining clients by word of mouth.

There are seedier options, of course. A washed-out alcoholic with shaky hands may be the only doctor who will treat a gunshot wound at 3 a.m., no questions asked. The risks are high: dirty, obsolete tools, antibiotics (if any) well past their expiration date, and a slug of whiskey as "anesthesia." His sutures might look like the work of Dr. Frankenstein. He can, however, save a life and keep his mouth shut.

**Surgical Kit (TL6).** Instruments include precision locking forceps, small and specialized scalpels, and other all-metal tools that are easy to clean and sterilize. The reusable needles and scalpels require occasional sharpening. The included suturing material is *sterilized*. \$300, 15 lbs. LC4.

**Surgical Kit (TL7).** These light, ergonomically designed instruments allow lengthy procedures that don't fatigue the surgeon, and include micro-tools for dealing with tiny vascular problems. Many components are disposable; needles and scalpels, sharpened to a keen edge at the factory, are discarded after a single operation. Everything is hypoallergenic and easily sterilized. +1 to skill. \$300, 15 lbs. LC4.

**Surgical Kit (TL8).** As TL7, but adds micromanipulators for handling nerves, plus scalpels and scissors with micron-thin cutting edges. Rechargeable batteries power a sizable portion of the tools, allowing quicker, less labor-intensive, and more finely tuned work. Many items are constructed from titanium and exotic alloys. Interestingly, catgut is *still* used for suturing. +2 to skill. \$300, 15 lbs. LC4.

## Surgical Theaters (TL5)

Sometimes a surgeon needs more than just a bone saw and a scalpel. Generally, treating a major wound or performing reconstructive surgery (e.g., repairing a crippled limb) demands a surgical theater. Such equipment requires external power at TL6-8.

## Operating Theater (TL5)

This is an entire room full of specialized gear – including the best anesthesia equipment (see *Anesthesia*, pp. 224-225) for the TL. It gives +2 (quality) to Surgery. \$200,000, 1,000 lbs. LC3.

## Portable Surgery (TL5)

This complete surgical setup typically travels in a utility vehicle, a trailer, or a large hospital cart, and includes portable anesthesia equipment appropriate to the TL. The military often uses it as a mobile field surgery. Packing or unpacking it takes *at least* five minutes; half an hour is more typical. It gives +1 (quality) to Surgery and +2 (quality) to First Aid. \$50,000, 500 lbs. LC3.

## Specialized Operating Theater (TL6)

As *Operating Theater* (above), but dedicated to a single Surgery specialty; e.g., neurosurgery or heart surgery. It gives +TL/2 (quality) to *that* specialty but counts as basic equipment for other purposes. \$1,000,000, 1,000 lbs. LC3.

## Suturing Kit (TL6)

Commonly found in paramedic bags and crash kits, and sometimes sold as a "surgical kit" by military surplus stores, this gear counts as basic equipment for *simple* applications of Surgery; e.g., stitching non-major wounds. It's improvised equipment – giving -5 (quality) – for all other purposes, including treating major wounds. The GM decides which tasks are "simple." \$20, 1 lb. LC4.

## Surgical Laser (TL8)

This multi-purpose tool can cut flesh, debride a burn, or administer cosmetic surgery (p. 225), and counts as fine-quality Surgery equipment. It inflicts at most 1d-3 tight-beam burning damage. \$100,000, 200 lbs., external power. LC3.

## ANESTHESIA

After 1850, anesthesia for surgery was commonly available in Europe and the U.S. – including at most American Civil War field hospitals, contrary to popular myth. Inhalant anesthetics are volatile, and require storage in airtight containers until shortly before use. It takes about a minute to put a cooperative patient under, or three to five minutes for an uncooperative one. If the roll to administer anesthetic fails, Surgery skill is at -2, just as for no anesthetic (see *Surgery*, p. B424).

These rules cover *general* anesthesia. Local anesthetics for minor surgery are available after 1885, and are included in medical kits that need them.

## Chloroform or Ether Mask (TL5)

Make a Physician roll to use this device to administer chloroform or ether. Each dose costs \$5. \$50, 2 lbs. (plus anesthetic). LC3.