



DIVERSITY

Multishade Bandages Now Available for All Orthopaedic Patients

EMILY BENSON, MD, FAAOS

► Raymond Wurapa, MD, FAAOS, is the co-owner of Tru-Colour bandages and inventor of the company's patented designs. He is an accomplished orthopaedic hand surgeon with Orthopedic ONE in Columbus, Ohio, and a self-described "tinkerer."

Tru-Colour has created a paradigm shift for colors and shapes of bandages. Their irregular shapes allow them to function better, while allowing for range of motion on fingertips and joints. The fact that they come in various colors to match a wide variety of skin tones has really set this product apart. It finally gives darker-skinned individuals bandage options that match their skin tones, which has made some feel like they are being seen for the first time. (Read the July 2020 *AAOS Now* article on this topic, titled "We Hear You. We Feel You. We Are Learning From You.") It is a simple innovation that was long overdue. Tru-Colour is shaking up the bandage industry, and the response has been overwhelmingly positive.

Dr. Benson: You are an orthopaedic hand surgeon. How did you get involved in this Tru-Colour bandages project?

Dr. Wurapa: My journey started with the multiple minor hand injuries we see frequently and struggle to cover in an appropriate way, while allowing maximal hand function. The bandages currently available on the market create unsightly bulk or "dog-ears" when used to cover fingertips. Then my son was planning a project for the middle school interest fair, and he heard me talking about the bandages. He said, "I want to do that. Let's figure it out." Initially he called it the "starfish bandage" because that's what it looks like. He presented it and received an award. The feedback was positive, and we went ahead and filed a patent.

Toby Meisenheimer is one of the four co-owners behind Tru-Colour. He is white, but his family includes several adopted African American children. One time, he put a traditional beige/light Band-Aid® on his son's brown forehead, and his son said, "Hey, that's not for me! Where's my Band-Aid®?" (Editor's note: Band-Aid® is the brand name for the product produced by Johnson & Johnson.) Somehow, we connected through our networks and

just started talking. The more we talked, the more commonality we recognized. His product line was already focused on offering bandages in multiple shades. We basically combined our concepts and added a lighter shade so that the fingertip bandages and knuckle bandages now come in all the shades, from beige/light all the way to dark brown. Then it just transformed into this bigger movement and got some traction on social media.

The coolest thing for me is when I use them in the office. I have them there as an option. After I perform an injection and I place a Tru-Colour bandage, the patients get so tickled. It's almost indescribable. One common reaction is, "Oh my goodness, where did you get these things? And why hasn't it been around sooner?" Especially my middle-aged and older patients. The concept is so simple that it is surprising that it took this long for it to become a product. Especially since cartoon characters, Barbie dolls, and almost everything else get featured on bandages.

For almost 100 years, Johnson & Johnson has been producing Band-Aids® and exporting these beige/light bandages to parts of the world where mainly Black or brown people live. Everybody just went along with it, assuming there could never be choice. It has been an interesting journey. The recent social movement provided a subtle tap on the shoulder for all of us. This product concept is so subtle, it almost doesn't need explanation. Once most people see it, they immediately say "OK, I get it."

I remember as a kid when my love affair with stick-on bandages began, and I remember looking at that strange pinkish-beige color, and it certainly didn't match my skin. I have young kids now, and they love all kinds of bandages. When I heard about your product, I thought, "This is genius! Why didn't this happen decades ago?"

The timing is so appropriate, too. Nothing really has changed—the need, urgency, etc. It's just that social awareness has been raised up a couple of notches. It's encouraging that people in general are now more accepting of something like this than they may have been in the past.



Raymond Wurapa, MD, FAAOS

Have you heard from Johnson & Johnson, the makers of Band-Aid®?

Several years ago, when we started this process, we touched base with them and asked about collaborating. They said they had initiated something similar in the past, without success. They didn't think that there was a market for this product. At least that's what they said until this year, after noting the increased social awareness and seeing the overwhelming social media response to Tru-Colour. Suddenly, there was a company's Instagram post saying, "We hear you. We see you. We're listening to you." Now they're planning on releasing their own line of multishade bandages. In a sense, it's good that at least the needle has been moved. It would've been great if we could have worked together to build on our organic movement. We still made a powerful statement and created some large waves in the marketplace.

Have you had people come up to you and say, "This bandage has caused some kind of emotional response in me that I didn't anticipate?"

Yes, so many times. Responses have ranged from a simple chuckle to joyful tears. It is meant for physical healing, coverage, and protection of wounds, but there is a subtle psychological healing that occurs, too. It represents a recognition and celebration of diversity, wherever you fit on the color spectrum.

How are your bandages selling?

So far so good. We are constantly working on this. We are available online through our store at www.trucolourbandages.com, as well



Tru-Colour states that it "believes in the beauty of the individual" and with that commitment provides skin-tone shade bandages and kinesiology tape for everyone. COURTESY OF TRU-COLOUR

as on Amazon and many Target stores nationwide. We have several new venues, collaborations, and big vendors that are about to open in 2021.

Tru-Colour bandages are not meant to be a boutique product. One of our goals was to make them price-competitive, and therefore accessible to the masses. It just comes down to offering individual choice where people can say, "You know what, that's a good idea for me!" This is a great opportunity for us, and we're trying to take full advantage and get ourselves out there.

Some of our current challenges remain product awareness and market penetration. We have tried to take advantage of our agility as a small company with a social media campaign to compete with some of the behemoths in this field.

At this time, Tru-Colour is one of the leading brands in the multishade skin bandage space, so we'll see where things go from here. Good things are on the horizon.

Emily Benson, MD, FAAOS, is an orthopaedic trauma surgeon, director of the Department of Orthopedic Surgery at Ventura County Medical Center, and associate program director for the Community Memorial Hospital Orthopaedic Residency Program. She serves on the Diversity Task Force for the Orthopaedic Trauma Association as well as *AAOS Now*.