



**Tissuepatch is biocompatible and seals iatrogenic membrane defects in a rabbit model**

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7 **1 Tissuepatch is biocompatible and seals iatrogenic membrane defects in a**  
8 **2 rabbit model**

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7 33 **Conflict of Interest Statement**

8 34 The authors declare no conflict of interests.  
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29 48 **What's already known about this topic?**

- 30 49
- 31 50 • Iatrogenic PPROM is a major risk factor of fetoscopic procedures
  - 32 51 • So far used sealants are not efficient to prevent iPPROM
  - 33 52 • Further research is needed
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39 58 **What does this study add?**

- 40 59 • We screened five sealants for biocompatibility and efficacy to seal fetal membrane defects
  - 41 60 • Tissuepatch® was biocompatible and had a good efficacy
  - 42 61 • Tissuepatch® could be used in open fetal surgery to prevent iPPROM
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7 60 **Abstract**

8 61  
9 62 **Objective:** To evaluate novel sealing techniques for their biocompatibility and sealing capacity of  
10 63 iatrogenic fetal membrane defects in a pregnant rabbit model.

11 64 **Method:** At day 23 of gestation (term=d31), a standardized fetoscopy was performed through a 14G  
12 65 cannula. The resulting fetal membrane defect was closed with either condensed collagen, collagen  
13 66 with fibrinogen, Tissuepatch®, Duraseal®, or a conventional collagen plug (Lyostypt®) as reference. At  
14 67 d30 the fetuses were harvested and full thickness fetal membrane samples were analyzed. The study  
15 68 consisted of two consecutive parts: (1) biocompatibility testing by fetal survival, apoptosis and  
16 69 infiltration of polymorphonuclear cells in the membranes; (2) the efficacy to seal fetal membrane  
17 70 defects.

18 71 **Results:** Three sealants (collagen with fibrinogen, Duraseal® or Lyostypt®) were associated with a  
19 72 higher fetal mortality compared to control unmanipulated littermates, and hence were excluded  
20 73 from further analysis. Tissuepatch® was biocompatible and amniotic fluid levels were comparable to  
21 74 those of control untouched littermates. Compared to the condensed collagen, Tissuepatch® was also  
22 75 easier in surgical handling and induced limited cell proliferation.

23 76 **Conclusion:** Tissuepatch® had the best biocompatibility and efficacy in sealing an iatrogenic fetal  
24 77 membrane defect in the pregnant rabbit compared to other readily available sealants.  
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7 81 **Introduction**  
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83 Fetal membrane rupture remains the Achilles' heel of fetal surgery, occurring in around 28% of laser  
84 interventions for twin-twin transfusion syndrome (TTTS) and around 47% of fetoscopic endoluminal  
85 tracheal occlusion (FETO) for congenital diaphragmatic hernia (CDH)<sup>1,2</sup>. Therefore, several strategies  
86 to either treat or prevent membrane rupture have been proposed<sup>3-6</sup>.

87 Primary prevention of preterm premature rupture of membranes (PPROM) at the time of fetal  
88 surgery would be a useful approach. To our knowledge, only collagen and gelatin plugs have been  
89 used clinically for this purpose, however with contradicting results<sup>7-9</sup>. Clinical studies on potential  
90 new solutions are difficult to perform as "first-in-man" studies in pregnancy are challenging, using  
91 products that are or would be used off label. It is important to analyze the healing site histologically,  
92 and to set up a controlled study which is adequately powered. *In vivo* animal studies are hence vital  
93 to allow researchers to explore new solutions. The optimal candidate surgical solution to us, should  
94 ideally have the following features: (1) the device or material should be readily available and (2)  
95 clinically applicable through a 10 Fr, preferentially also an 8 Fr cannula, either as is or after  
96 modification. (3) The material should have the ability to be bio-activated and/or (4) to function as a  
97 transport of molecular therapeutics to interfere with, apart from the defect, other potential  
98 biomolecular mechanism behind iatrogenic PPROM (iPPROM)<sup>10</sup>."

99 Herein we report on four novel sealant techniques which we compared to the conventional collagen  
100 plugs (Lyostypt®) as a reference sealant in the study. One sealant is a condensed collagen, which has  
101 been tissue engineered from human fetal membranes and which demonstrated good growth-  
102 support of amnion epithelial cells<sup>11</sup>. The second sealant is an off-the-shelf collagen (Lyostypt®)  
103 imbued with fibrinogen. This was tested before *in vitro* in human amniotic membranes and showed  
104 improved sealing capabilities<sup>12</sup>. The third sealant is Tissuepatch® which is a thin film and clinically is  
105 used to obtain an airtight sealant in thoracoscopic surgeries. The fourth sealant is Duraseal®, which is  
106 used in neurosurgery for sealing dura mater defects and preventing cerebrospinal fluid leakage<sup>13</sup>.  
107 We tested those sealants *in vivo* for their biocompatibility (safety) and their efficacy to seal a fetal  
108 membrane defect in a pregnant rabbit model for fetoscopy.

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## 110 **Material and Methods**

### 111 112 *Study design*

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114 The study design is shown in Supplementary Figure 1. Pregnant rabbits underwent a laparotomy at  
115 23 days of gestation under general anaesthesia, three fetuses out of the total litter were operated on  
116 and assigned to one of 5 types of fetal membrane sealant or positive control (no sealant); the  
117 remaining fetuses acted as negative unoperated controls. One week later, pregnancies were  
118 evaluated for fetal survival, the primary outcome variable of the biocompatibility testing. Secondary  
119 outcomes were inflammation and apoptosis. Sealants performing best in the primary outcome  
120 measure were further tested for efficacy, i.e. by the deepest vertical pocket (DVP) on ultrasound at  
121 term. Further secondary outcomes were ease of surgical handling at the time of sealant insertion,  
122 and what were considered as additional efficacy outcome measures such as amniotic fluid leakage,  
123 persistence of the plug, Ki67 positive cells and the ratio of vimentin and cytokeratin as a marker for  
124 epithelial-mesenchymal transition (EMT). The lung-to-bodyweight ratio (LBWR) of the fetus was  
125 quantified as a further efficacy measure to assess pulmonary hypoplasia.

### 126 *Animal and surgical protocols*

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128 This experiment was approved by the local Ethics committee of KU Leuven (P250/2014) and animals  
129 were handled according to the current guidelines on animal welfare. Time mated pregnant does  
130 (hybrid of New Zealand and Dendermonde) were housed at the animalium of the group Biomedical  
131 Sciences in separate cages on a 12-hour light cycle with free access to food and water. At 23 days of  
132 gestational age (GA; term = 31 days) the doe was sedated with intramuscular ketamine 35 mg/kg  
133 bodyweight (BW) (Ketamine 1000 CEVA; CEVA Santé Animal, Brussels, Belgium) and xylazin 6 mg/kg  
134 BW (Vexylan®; CEVA Santé Animal). Buprenorphine 0.03 mg/kg (Vetergesic®; Reckitt Benckiser  
135 Healthcare, Brussels, Belgium), medroxyprogesterone acetate (Depo-Provera, Pfizer, Puurs, Belgium)  
136 and penicillin G (Kela Pharma, Hoogstraten, Belgium) were injected subcutaneously. General  
137 anesthesia was maintained using isoflurane 1.5% (Isoba® Vet; Abbott Laboratories Ltd.,  
138 Queensborough, Kent, UK) in oxygen at 2 L/minute via a facemask. Maternal vital parameters were  
139 monitored with a pulse oxymeter (Nellcor® N- 20P; Nellcor Inc., Haasrode, Belgium). Physiologic body  
140 temperature was maintained by a heating pad.

141 The doe was placed in the supine position, the abdomen was shaved and disinfected with povidone  
142 iodine (Isobetadine®; Asta Medica, Brussels, Belgium) and covered with sterile drapes. After midline  
143 laparotomy, the uterus was exposed and the fetal sacs counted. We operated on three fetuses in  
144 each litter, i.e. both ovarian end fetuses and one more in the horn with the highest number of  
145 fetuses, leaving one unoperated fetus in between. In case of equal numbers of fetuses in both horns,

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7 146 a random side was chosen. First a small myometrial incision of 3-4 mm was made on the anti-  
8 147 mesometrial side. Blunt dissection of the chorion was performed to gain access to the amnion and to  
9 148 avoid damage to the vitelline vessels (Figure 1A). After exposure of the amniotic membrane, it was  
10 149 punctured with a 14 G Cannula (Braun Medical N.V., Diegem, Belgium) at a perpendicular angle and a  
11 150 standardized diagnostic fetoscopy of fixed duration (2 min) was performed with a 1.0 mm  
12 151 embryoscope (11510A, Karl Storz, Tutlingen, Germany) within a 1.3 mm examination sheath  
13 152 (11510KA, Karl Storz) (Supplementary Video 1, Figure 1B), as previously described<sup>14</sup>. By using this  
14 153 type of diameter instruments, the defect was large enough (around 1.3 mm) to surgically introduce  
15 154 the sealant.

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20 155 The gestational sacs were randomly assigned to one of the following treatment groups: (1) Lyostypt®  
21 156 (B. Braun Medical N.V.), (2) Lyostypt® soaked in fibrinogen concentrate (Haemocomplettan®, CSL  
22 157 Behring, Breda, The Netherlands), (3) condensed collagen, (4) Tissuepatch® (Tissuemed Ltd, Leeds,  
23 158 United Kingdom), (5) Duraseal® (Integra LS N.V., Zaventem, Belgium) or (6) positive controls (SHAM  
24 159 surgery without sealant). The sealant was positioned in or over the amnion defect. The collagen  
25 160 sealants were fixed within the defect by a single stitch 6-0 Prolene to the fetal membranes and the  
26 161 myometrium (Ethicon, Johnson & Johnson Medical N.V., Diegem, Belgium). Tissuepatch® was fixed  
27 162 on the inside of the amniotic cavity with its self-adhesive side to the amnion epithelium with two 6-0  
28 163 Prolene sutures to the fetal membranes and the myometrium. Duraseal® was sprayed upon the  
29 164 amniotic defect. Any problem with proper placement of the plug, or any discordant opinion on  
30 165 appropriate plug positioning by the surgeons (ACE and LJ) were categorized as problematic. The  
31 166 unoperated gestation sacs were used as negative controls. The myometrium was closed with 3 single  
32 167 stitches with 6-0 Prolene suture (Figure 1D). The doe's abdominal wall was closed in two layers with  
33 168 2-0 Vicryl (Ethicon) for the muscular layer and 3-0 Ethilon (Ethicon) for the intracutaneous skin  
34 169 suture.

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37 170 At 30 days GA, the does were premedicated and anesthetized as above. Micro-ultrasound (Vevo®  
38 171 2100 System, Visual Sonics, Toronto) was used to assess the deepest vertical pocket (DVP) and  
39 172 determine fetal survival. After that, macroscopic amniotic fluid leakage at the operated area was  
40 173 evaluated with blotting paper (3x1 cm, 125 g/m<sup>2</sup>, Aurora Productions SA, Turnhout, Belgium) for 10  
41 174 seconds after drying the area with surgical gauze. Thereafter the does and fetuses were euthanized  
42 175 with an intravenous bolus of a mixture of embutramide 200 mg, mebezonium 50 mg, and tetracaine  
43 176 hydrochloride 5 mg (0,3 mL/kg T61; Marion Roussel Hoechst, Brussels, Belgium) and samples were  
44 177 obtained.

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54 178 *Harvesting and sample preparation*  
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7 179 We identified the entry point to the fetal sac by the marking suture and pre-elevated it “en bloc”  
8 180 (amnion, chorion and myometrium; further referred to as FM sample). Persistence or absence of the  
9 181 plug in the myometrium and/or the fetal membranes was macroscopically assessed from the inside  
10 182 of the amniotic cavity. FM samples of surviving fetuses were stored in tissue embedding cassettes  
11 183 (Simport, Beloeil, Quebec, Canada) on foam biopsy pads (Leica Biosystems N.V., Maarn, The  
12 184 Netherlands) and submerged in 4% buffered paraformaldehyde (PFA) (Klinipath BV, Duiven, The  
13 185 Netherlands) for 24 hours. They were then transferred to 70% ethanol and embedded in paraffin. At  
14 186 necropsy, the fetus and its lungs were weighed and the LBWR was calculated.

#### 187 *Histology and semi-automatic quantification*

188 Paraffin blocks were cut in 4- $\mu$ m sections displaying the area of the defect. Staining with hematoxylin  
189 and eosin (H&E) was performed and an average score from 3 high power fields per slide (x40  
190 magnification) around the defect was calculated for polymorphonuclear cell (PMN) infiltration as  
191 previously described<sup>15</sup>. Immunohistochemistry (IHC) for Ki67, Vimentin and Cytokeratin was  
192 performed according to standard IHC protocols as described before<sup>16</sup>. TUNEL staining (In Situ Cell  
193 Death Detection Kit, Fluorescein; Roche Diagnostics GmbH, Mannheim, Germany), detecting  
194 apoptotic cells, was performed according to the producer’s recommendations with DAPI as a  
195 background staining. Ki67 was quantified to assess cell proliferation. The presence of EMT was  
196 investigated by an IHC vimentin/cytokeratin ratio.

197 IHC and TUNEL positive cell density measurements were performed semi-automatically, using ImageJ  
198 software (v1.48, NIH, USA). From each slide, 3 random non-overlapping images were recorded  
199 (Axioskop; Carl Zeiss) at x40 magnification at the contact-area between sealant and tissue. An  
200 average density was calculated for each slide and presented as mean  $\pm$  standard deviation (SD). The  
201 digital color images were segmented, and Ki67, Vimentin and Cytokeratin staining was quantified.  
202 The total number of cells as well as the amount of positively stained cells was determined, and the  
203 density was expressed as a percentage (positive cell area/total area of cells). TUNEL staining was  
204 expressed as a percentage of TUNEL positive cells/ DAPI positive cells.

#### 205 *Statistics*

206 Statistical analysis was performed with SPSS® Statistics software v21.0. (IBM®, Company). A p-value  
207 of <0.05 was considered significant. Continuous variables were tested for normal distribution by  
208 Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and expressed as mean and standard deviation (SD). Binomial and ordinal  
209 variables were expressed as percentage and score, respectively. One-way ANOVA with Tukey post-  
210 hoc analysis was used to compare normally distributed continuous variables and Kruskal-Wallis test



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7 211 for non-normally distributed continuous variables. Chi-square test was used for binomial and ordinal  
8 212 variables. The investigational groups were compared to the negative controls. Positive controls were  
9 213 used as reference, if no negative control group was included in the outcome. Lyostypt® was used as  
10 214 reference for surgical handling readouts (Supplementary Table 1). Statistical results are represented  
11 215 in APA (American Psychological Association) style. Power calculation was performed with StatMate  
12 216 v2.0 (GraphPad, San Diego, California, USA) according to the published literature <sup>4</sup>, we calculated that  
13 217 a sample size of 9 fetuses/group would provide a power of ≥85% with a 5% two-sided type I error to  
14 218 detect a 20% difference in fetal survival.  
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For Peer Review

**Results**

A total of 35 does and 332 fetuses were included in the study. There were 231 unmanipulated control fetuses, 18 in the Lyostypt® group, 14 in the condensed collagen group, 25 in the collagen + fibrinogen group, 13 in the Tissuepatch® group, 15 in the Duraseal® group and 16 in the unsealed positive control group.

Overall, fetal survival in unsealed sacs tended to be lower (75%) than in unmanipulated control sacs (91%), yet that did not reach statistical significance ( $\chi^2=3,478$ ;  $p=0,082$ , Table 1). Two sealants had no effect on fetal survival when compared to unmanipulated control sacs: Condensed collagen (11/14, 78%;  $\chi^2=1,831$ ;  $p=0,175$ ) and Tissuepatch® 10/13, 77%;  $\chi^2=2,225$ ;  $p=0,149$ ). Sealing with three of the used strategies was associated with a reduced fetal survival compared to negative controls, i.e. Lyostypt® (13/18, 72%;  $\chi^2=5,314$ ;  $p=0,038$ ), collagen + fibrinogen (12/25, 48%;  $\chi^2=32,996$ ;  $p<0,001$ ) and Duraseal® (9/15, 60%;  $\chi^2=12,226$ ;  $p=0,004$ , Table 1). However, in sacs of surviving fetuses from these three sealant groups, there was no difference with positive controls in terms of inflammation (number of PMN) ( $\chi^2=13,067$ ;  $p=0,364$ ), or TUNEL positive cells ( $F=2,135$ ;  $p=0,056$ ) (Figure 2 and Table 1).

Pregnancies sealed using condensed collagen and Tissuepatch® underwent further efficacy testing. Tissuepatch® sealed sacs had a DVP comparable to that of normal controls ( $4,64 \pm 2,24$  vs  $6,93 \pm 3,80$ ) but condensed collagen sealed sacs had a significantly lower DVP at harvesting ( $1,89 \pm 1,30$ ;  $F=8,638$ ;  $p<0,001$ ). There was a 10% amniotic fluid leakage rate ( $n=1/10$ ) in the Tissuepatch® group which was significantly less than the condensed collagen group ( $n=6/11$ ) and the positive controls ( $n=6/12$ ;  $\chi^2=4,023$ ;  $p=0,045$ ). It was also easier to insert Tissuepatch® than the condensed collagen plug with less problems at plug insertion ( $\chi^2=179,535$ ;  $p<0,001$ ). There was no difference in macroscopic persistence of the sealing materials used ( $\chi^2=11,399$ ;  $p=0,44239$ ). Remarkably, there were no differences in LBWR between any of the four groups ( $F=1,417$ ;  $p=0,213$ ). The degree of cell proliferation (Ki67), was higher in the Tissuepatch® group than in negative controls ( $3,03, \pm 1,81$  versus  $1,23 \pm 0,72$ ;  $F=4,575$ ;  $p<0,001$ ). There was no difference in the proportion of cells staining for vimentin or cytokeratin (EMT) between the treatment groups, positive or negative controls ( $F=1,804$ ;  $p=0,106$ ) (Figure 3 and Table 1). Single electron microscopy (SEM) images were taken from the Lyostypt® and condensed collagen plugs to compare the structure of the two sealants and revealed a smaller diameter, higher density and better alignment of collagen fibers in the condensed collagen (Supplementary Figure 2).

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7 253 **Discussion**

8 254  
9 255 Herein we compared 4 new techniques to seal iatrogenic fetal membrane defects in a fetoscopy  
10 256 rabbit model in terms of biocompatibility and efficacy with a previously used technique of Lyostypt®.  
11 257 Three of the sealants were associated with a higher rate of fetal demise compared to non-operated  
12 258 control pregnancies. Tissuepatch® and condensed collagen were the only sealants that had similar  
13 259 results to non-operated controls in the primary outcome variable of fetal survival, but Tissuepatch®  
14 260 proved easier to manipulate surgically and induced limited cell proliferation.

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18 261 We first screened candidate sealants for the most direct adverse effect, i.e. fetal death. In the group  
19 262 of products initially screened yet later disqualified, the fetal death rate ranged from 28 to 52%,  
20 263 versus a death rate of around 25% in positive controls. The latter loss rate is in line with previous  
21 264 studies, confirming reproducibility of the model<sup>4,16</sup>. At the same time, it indicates a frailty of the  
22 265 model due to anesthesia and manipulation of the uterus and its contents. The increased death rate in  
23 266 three of the sealant treatment groups would therefore suggest an additional factor besides  
24 267 fetoscopy as potential cause of death. Histological examination did not demonstrate any increased  
25 268 apoptosis or infiltration of polymorphonuclear cells in the membranes of these three sealant groups.  
26 269 With the current design, we were unable to investigate precisely the cause and timing of fetal death  
27 270 as there was only one time point of fetal viability evaluation, to limit repeated anaesthesia in the  
28 271 does. In the collagen + fibrinogen group there was a higher (>50%) death rate, yet no obvious factor  
29 272 explaining that excess could be identified. Potential explanations are local fibrin formation, when  
30 273 fibrinogen gets in contact with the amniotic fluid. Such increased mortality was already described in  
31 274 earlier experiments, where fibrin glue was used<sup>18</sup>. The exact mechanism behind that remains  
32 275 unclear. The fetal survival in the Duraseal® group was also lower. Again, we did not find a direct  
33 276 explanation on necropsy or histology in that group. Potentially it ties to the injectable nature of the  
34 277 product or its expanding nature<sup>19</sup>. During injection components of the glue can freely and  
35 278 excessively enter the amniotic cavity and may have direct effects on the fetus.

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44 279 We then moved into further experimentation with Tissuepatch® and condensed collagen, to study  
45 280 efficacy. Condensed collagen plug created unfortunate problems at surgical plug insertion despite its  
46 281 good biocompatibility. Problems associated with insertion of the condensed collagen plug included  
47 282 structural break down of the plug during surgical manipulation and difficulties at suturing, which  
48 283 influenced further readouts. Tissuepatch® sealed sacs had a DVP in the normal range and obvious  
49 284 leakage rate was low, within the range of intact sacs of unmanipulated controls. Macroscopically the  
50 285 plug seemed well locked to the sealing site by sutures. On histological examination, we did not see  
51 286 direct evidence of integration and / or healing response despite an elevated proportion of Ki67  
52 287 positive cells in the Tissuepatch group compared to negative controls. During the fixation of the  
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7 288 sealing site in PFA, Tissuepatch® dissolves partly, making it impossible to trace the initial borders and  
8 289 integrity of the plug. Indirectly however, there was no evidence for much interaction between the  
9 290 plug and the sealing product, as we did not see an increase in proliferation, signs of inflammation nor  
10 291 apoptotic effect around the sealing site. It is therefore not impossible that the effect of this product  
11 292 being sutured into a fetoscopic defect, was merely mechanical plugging, yet without causing direct  
12 293 local inflammatory or fetal side effects. Assuming the efficacy of Tissuepatch®, one could speculate  
13 294 on how this would be clinically translated. This would obviously be an off-label use, yet it is an FDA  
14 295 approved product for visceral pleura sealing. The patch has a self-adhesive visceral side, yet we could  
15 296 not take advantage of this in this model and still needed to fix the patch as the adhesive properties in  
16 297 under water conditions are not documented. A more intuitive clinical application would be to use  
17 298 this patch in open fetal surgeries where suturing to the amnion would be feasible.

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23 299 This study has some limitations, particularly when comparing the rabbit model of fetal membrane  
24 300 sealing with human pregnancy. The myometrial thickness and contractility as well as the resealing  
25 301 capabilities of the rabbit amnion are different from those in women<sup>20</sup>. Also, there is the difference of  
26 302 the application method one can use in this animal model and what would be possible in the clinical  
27 303 situation. The size difference of the defect makes surgical applications of sealants more difficult  
28 304 compared to the clinical situation. In clinical fetoscopy it is also not possible to place a sealant on the  
29 305 chorionic side of the amnion, which is possible in the rabbit model as amnion, chorion and uterine  
30 306 wall are not attached to each other. Also in this experiment, there was a clear relationship between  
31 307 difficulties handling properties and later efficacy. So, it is possible that we underestimate efficacy of  
32 308 certain methods because they are difficult to insert in a rabbit. As the application technique itself  
33 309 was not a focus of our study, one would need to investigate products in another model that is better  
34 310 simulating clinical circumstances. The choice for some readouts may also need to be questioned. For  
35 311 instance, we assessed EMT, because it was earlier named to be relevant in human amnion samples  
36 312 from clinical fetoscopies<sup>21</sup>. EMT is a key-component of wound healing, and we speculated that it  
37 313 would point to local regeneration. Herein we could not demonstrate any change in EMT between any  
38 314 of the groups, questioning it as an outcome measure in this model. In retrospect, we could have  
39 315 included other readouts such as fetal systemic inflammation to understand adverse effects more  
40 316 effectively, or could have followed up on fetuses postoperatively to determine the GA at intra-  
41 317 uterine fetal death. This study also involved several subjective outcome measures. No matter how  
42 318 much we tried to make our readouts as objective as possible, they are not free of a certain amount of  
43 319 operator bias. Lastly, some of our observations were not in line with other studies using the same  
44 320 model. For instance we did not find a decrease of LBWR due to the decreased amniotic fluid<sup>22</sup>.

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7 321 On the other hand, our study had strengths, we observed that many other outcomes were similar to  
8 322 what was demonstrated earlier (survival rate, outcomes in positive and negative controls, and the  
9 323 amniotic fluid). This would suggest that findings in the rabbit model are reproducible. Also, we  
10 324 explored several methods, many of them clinically conceivable. The numbers of animals used are  
11 325 high compared to previous studies and our study was adequately powered. The microscopic  
12 326 readouts were done semi-automatically.

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16 327 In summary, this study provides experimental evidence that Tissuepatch® has the best combination  
17 328 of biocompatibility, surgical ease and efficacy in sealing an iatrogenic fetal membrane defect in the  
18 329 pregnant rabbit compared to other sealants. However, the current formulation of Tissuepatch® is not  
19 330 easy to insert fetoscopically in an effective way. Therefore, our quest into an effective and clinically  
20 331 usable and approved sealing technique is ongoing.

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7 **397 Acknowledgments**

8 398  
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10 400 Ivan Laermans & Rosita Kinnart for handling the animals. We thank Tissuemed Ltd and Integra LS N.V.  
11 401 for donating us samples of their products.  
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16 404 **Figure legend**

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18 405 Figure 1: Photographs of the surgical procedure. (A) Opening of the myometrium and chorion. View  
19 406 on amnion before puncturing. (B) Fetoscopic view of fetal front limb. (C) Insertion of a collagen plug  
20 407 while withdrawing the cannula. (D) Closure of the myometrium.  
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23 408 Figure 2: Results of TUNEL staining displayed along with two microscopic images of TUNEL stainings  
24 409 at x40 magnification. DAPI was used as background staining (blue).  
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26 410 Figure 3: Graphical results of the efficacy testing. Results of the second part of the study that were  
27 411 retrieved as percentage are displayed in table 1.  
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32 413 **Table legend**

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34 414 Table 1: Results for each variable and each sealant are given including the significance level. Results  
35 415 are presented as percentages or as mean with standard deviation (SD) where appropriate. P-values  
36 416 were calculated by cross-tables including all groups. PMN = polymorphonuclear cell infiltration.  
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41 418 **Supplementary**

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43 419 Supplementary Figure 1: Workflow of the study.  
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45 420 Supplementary Figure 2: Comparison of condensed collagen vs Lyostypt® by single electron  
46 421 microscopy (SEM) shows a a smaller diameter, higher density and better alignment of collagen fibers  
47 422 in the condensed collagen compared to Lyostypt®.  
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50 423 Supplementary Video 1: Video of rabbit fetoscopy.  
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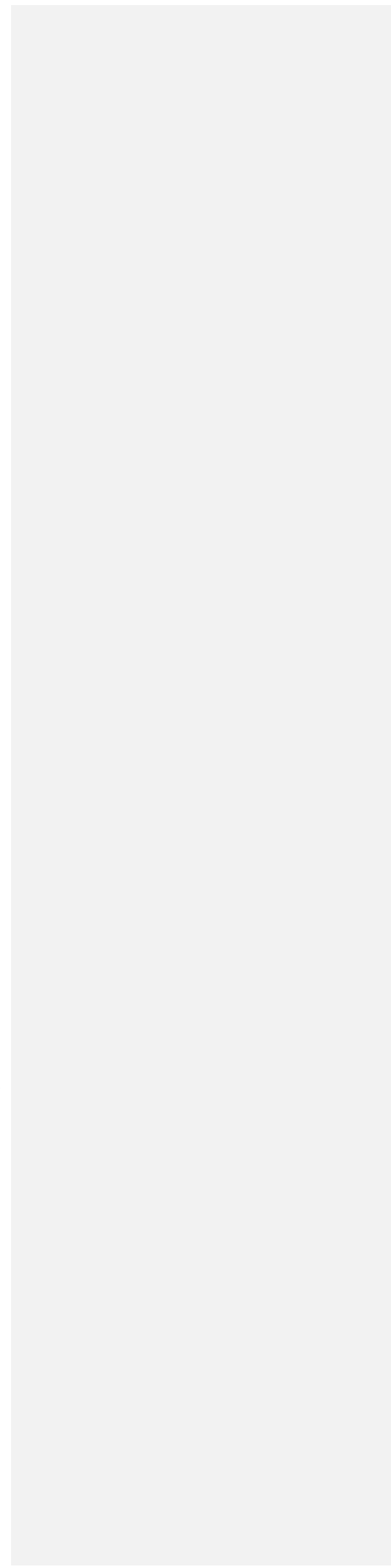
52 424 Supplementary Table 1: Statistical tests with normal distribution and used reference group for all  
53 425 readouts.  
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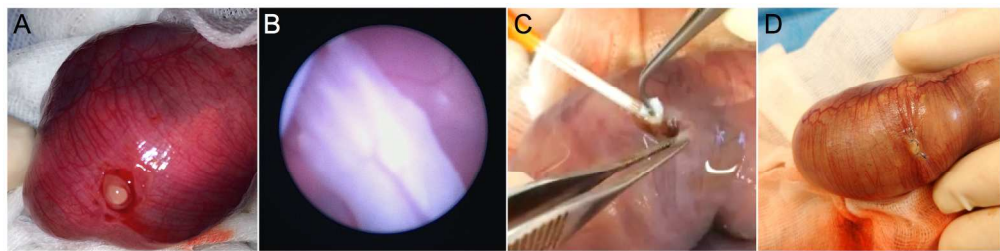


Figure 1: Photographs of the surgical procedure. (A) Opening of the myometrium and chorion. View!! † 317  
on amnion before puncturing. (B) Fetoscopic view of fetal front limb. (C) Insertion of a collagen plug!! † 318  
while withdrawing the cannula. (D) Closure of the myometrium.

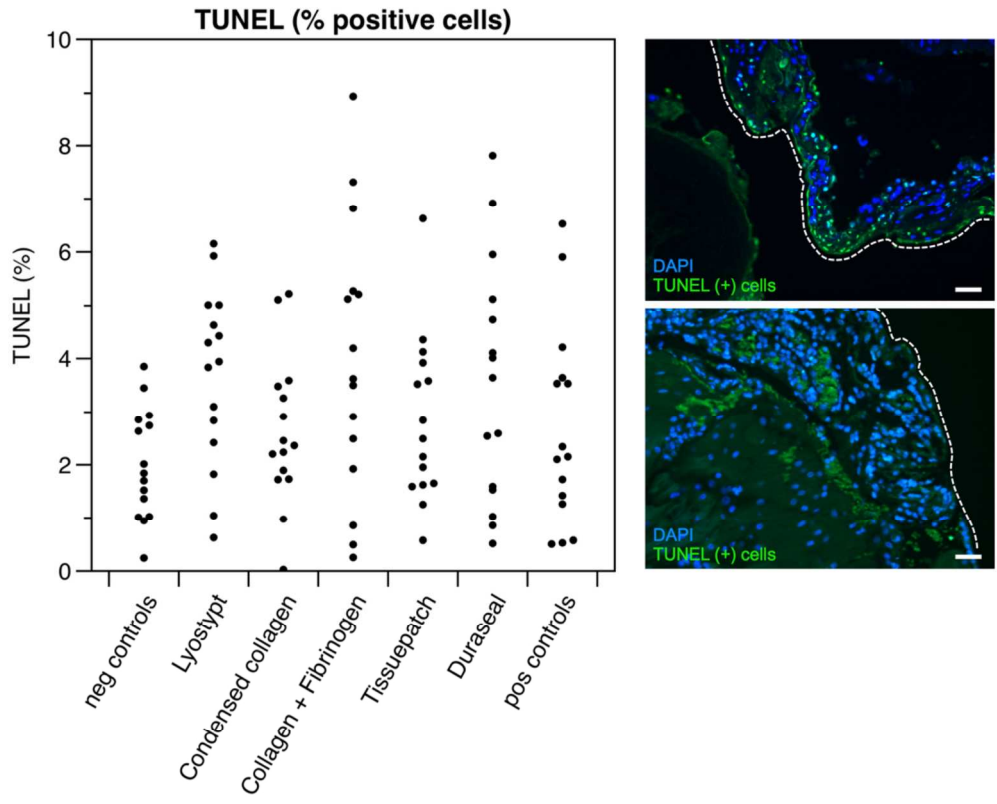


Figure 2: Results of TUNEL staining displayed along with two microscopic images of TUNEL stainings!! † 320 at x40 magnification. DAPI was used as background staining (blue).

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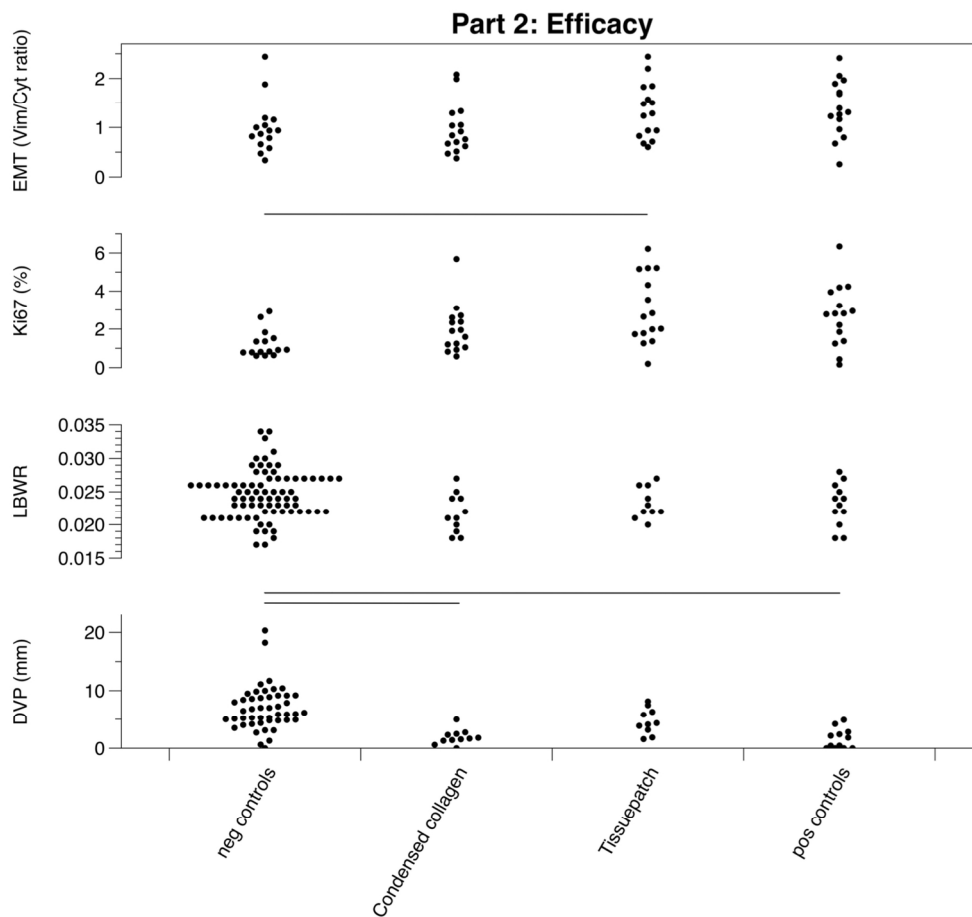


Figure 3: Graphical results of the efficacy testing. Results of the second part of the study that were retrieved as percentage are displayed in table 1.

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**Part 1: Biocompatibility:**

Readout	Neg controls	Lyostypt	Condensed collagen	Coll+Fibr	Tissuepatch	Duraseal	Pos controls	P-value
Fetal survival (%)	208/231(91%)	13/18 (72%)*	11/14 (78%)	12/25 (48%)*	10/13 (77%)	9/15 (60%)*	12/16 (75%)	<0,001
PMNs (mean score)	0,73 (±0,458)	1,00 (±0,378)	0,80 (±0,414)	1,00 (±0,535)	0,80 (±0,414)	1,13 (±0,352)	0,87 (±0,352)	0,364
TUNEL (%)	2,01 (±1,03)	3,67 (±1,67)	2,61 (±1,39)	3,93 (±2,56)	2,81 (±1,56)	3,53 (±2,27)	2,66 (±1,87)	0,056

**Part 2: Efficacy:**

Readout	Neg controls	Condensed collagen	Tissuepatch	Pos controls	P-value
DVP (mm)	6,93 (±3,80)	1,89 (±1,30)*	4,68 (±2,24)	1,60 (±1,73)*	<0,001
Fluid leakage (%)	-	6/11 (55%)	1/10 (10%)*	6/12 (50%)	<0,001
Problems at plug insertion (%)	-	5/11 (45%)*	1/10 (10%)	-	<0,001
Persistence of plug (%)	-	7/11 (64%)	9/10 (90%)	-	0,449
LBWR (ratio)	0,025 ± 0,003	0,022 ± 0,002	0,023 ± 0,002	0,023± 0,003	0,213
Ki67 (%)	1,23 (±0,722)	2,00 (±1,274)	3,03 (±1,805)*	2,70 (±1,609)	<0,001
Vim/Cyt (ratio)	1,00 (±0,536)	0,97 (±0,512)	1,33 (±0,568)	1,38 (±0,579)	0,106

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