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DPR: In the dental profession, it is said an ideal infection control compliance program requires a team approach that includes dental personnel, consultants/educators, patients and dental product manufacturers. Tell me about how you feel Hu-Friedy has taken on the role to promote infection control compliance.

MTF: The CDC Guidelines for Infection Control in Dental Health-Care Settings—2003 provide infection control protocol that is considered standard of care and best practices. With regard to contaminated dental instruments, the CDC stresses that these should be handled carefully to prevent exposure to sharp instruments that can cause a percutaneous injury. It is recommended to use an “appropriate container” to minimize exposure potential during all phases of instrument processing. Hu-Friedy’s Instrument Management System (IMS) minimizes risks of injury to those who handle contaminated instruments and helps the end user follow recommended dental infection control protocol.

DPR: Would you explain a little about the design of dental cassettes and discuss how they enhance safety?

MTF: Dental cassettes eliminate the need to handle the instruments, which is the most dangerous part of instrument processing. The instruments are held securely in a locked container during transportation, cleaning, sterilization and storage. Time-consuming and dangerous hand scrubbing and sorting prior to packaging is eliminated. In addition, instruments are held firmly by medical grade color-coded rails that keep the instruments in place, preventing them from becoming loose in the cassette.

Hu-Friedy’s Infinity Series Cassettes feature a single-latch locking mechanism that securely fastens the two halves of the cassette together. This insures that the contents cannot accidentally spill

during any phase of instrument transportation and processing, thus decreasing the risk and likelihood of an occupational injury. A single lock allows dental personnel to lock the cassette with one hand, which aids the efficiency, speed and safety. The clinician can also quickly identify whether the cassette is in the open or locked position—minimizing the potential and risk of dropping individual sharp instruments. These features are all validated by the manufacturer and contribute to providing a safer protocol.

DPR: Do manufacturers have a vested interest in the prevention of disease transmission in the dental office? If so, how might a manufacturer serve the dental community?

MTF: I see dental manufacturers, such as Hu-Friedy, as providing a valuable and continued liaison between clinicians and regulatory agencies, educators and patients. Manufacturers continue to develop and enhance products according to clinician needs and other influencing factors, such as development of regulations and patient perception. A perfect example of this is the evolution of dental cassettes. Specifically, the new Infinity Series Cassettes provide a more optimal environment for cleaning and sterilization. Increased open area of the cassette along with the reduced instrument contact from the rails allows for better access to the hard-to-reach areas of the instruments during cleaning and sterilization. Secondly, design evolutions incorporated an improved rail system that holds instruments securely in place yet has minimal contact with instruments. This allows for more effective instrument washing and greater access to all instrument surfaces.

DPR: How have dental cassettes impacted patient perception? And, is there any impact upon patient care?

MTF: With a multitude of highly visible breaches of infection control in the media in the last several years, patients may experience apprehension and

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concern about infection control policies within their personal dental office. Patients appreciate that instruments have been carefully processed for them and their intended procedure. A cassette on a bracket table that is unwrapped immediately prior to patient care offers comfort, confidence and an air of professionalism to the dental patient. It exhibits that infection control is a high priority for a dental practice in both perception and reality.

In conclusion, I’d like to stress the goal of ensuring a safe dental visit for both patients and dental personnel. Through research and development of infection control products and collaboration with dental personnel, manufacturers maintain a major role in infection control compliance and the prevention of disease transmission in the dental setting. The evolution of dental cassettes is a prime example of a manufacturer responding to the needs of those who handle contaminated dental instruments. The IMS Infinity Series Cassette design has been updated to support the next level in professionalism, cleaning capacity, ease of use and optimal patient care.