Fighting Hospital-Acquired Infections

Hospitals are supposed to treat people, not make them sick. Yet that’s what happens every year to an estimated two million people in the U.S. who get an infection during their hospital stay.

In fact, more people die from hospital-acquired infections each year than from AIDS, breast cancer and auto accidents combined. Similar situations exist worldwide. 3M’s global reach and expertise in infection prevention deliver solutions hospitals are looking for to prevent infections from happening within their walls.

“Hospital-acquired infections bring both social and economic burdens, including an estimated cost of $20 billion worldwide to treat these infections, many of which are avoidable,” said Mark Whitworth, business development manager, 3M Infection Prevention Division.

Besides financial and productivity costs, hospital-acquired infections can mean a serious loss in reputation. “We have the knowledge, the clinical expertise, the people and the products to help our clinical customers improve how they prevent infections,” said Silvia Perez, international business director, 3M Infection Prevention Division.

“We teach evidence-based practices for preventing infections, and we design products to fit those best practices,” Perez said. For example, 3M is helping hospitals to improve hand hygiene, track infection data, and reduce surgical site infections.

“We know that certain steps and products will reduce infection rates,” said Todd Lutkauskas, 3M Infection Prevention in Latin America, where 95 percent of hospitals still use washable linen drapes in the operating room. “3M has an opportunity to educate clinicians about the benefits of disposable, sterile drapes—how they create a moisture-proof barrier and reduce surgical site infections,” Lutkauskas said.

In addition to working with the ministries of health in several countries, 3M works with local physicians and nurses who are respected thought leaders and sponsors educational seminars and training for clinicians. “We share what we’re learning from customers and we tell customers the latest things we’re doing in the lab to address their issues,” Perez said. “It’s a constant process.”