

inventors corner

Tackling MRSA head on

Christian Fellowes and co-inventor **Dr Ryan Kerstein** recently qualified as doctors from Imperial and during their studies they came up with a disposable tourniquet called Tournistrip (see Reporter 178).



The tourniquet, an essential tool for medical staff when taking blood or inserting a drip, is wrapped around a limb and tightened to make veins become more prominent. As the new Tournistrip is disposable, the inventors hope it could help reduce the spread of hospital infections such as MRSA.

Dr Fellowes explains how his clinical observations stimulated this entrepreneurial idea: “We saw medical staff using reusable tourniquets which could potentially transfer infective organisms from patient to patient.

“Disposable rubber gloves were also used as tourniquets but this seemed unprofessional and uncomfortable,” he continues. “We wanted to design a device which could minimise infections and provide a practical and cost-effective alternative to current methods.”

To achieve this, the pair came up with the Tournistrip, which is made of plasticised paper with a quick seal and release sticking mechanism. “We consulted with Professor Darzi, who suggested we approach Imperial Innovations with our idea,” Dr Fellowes says. “They liked it and helped us to

develop it. We were able to produce prototype products which were tested on patients in two major hospitals. The trials offered an insight into usability from a patient’s perspective and proved that the concept could work.”

In 2007 spin-out company A Sep Healthcare was set up to take the Tournistrip further and management with commercial experience were recruited. There is already a great deal of interest in the product and the company is in the final stages of negotiation with several UK based medical trusts. Dr Fellowes is hopeful that within a few months the Tournistrip will be used routinely by them.

Commenting on the challenge of developing the device, he says: “It’s true that invention is five per cent inspiration and 95 per cent perspiration. For a product to be successful you have to believe in it and refuse to give up.”

— MICHELLE COTTERILL, IMPERIAL INNOVATIONS

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