

DUCTWORK cleaning

Darren Ling, sales director from System Hygienics, looks at how cleaning the ventilation systems in hospitals is helping to eradicate MRSA contamination.

System Hygienics is helping healthcare professionals to identify and eradicate MRSA bacteria in hospital ventilation systems, enabling them to meet Department of Health guidelines.

In a recent survey at a major hospital in the East of England, System Hygienics undertook analysis of samples taken from the ventilation system (before and after cleaning) throughout the building, including open wards and isolation rooms. Out of 14 samples, evidence of MRSA contamination was found in nine areas of the ventilation system. System Hygienics then cleaned the ventilation ductwork using its JetVent system. Subsequent analysis of samples taken from the same locations within the hospital proved negative for MRSA bacteria.

As a result of this cleaning procedure, the hospital was able to meet the Department of Health's guidelines on the operational management and performance verification of specialised ventilation systems (Health Technical

Memorandum 03-01: Specialised Ventilation for Healthcare Premises, published December 2007). The guidelines state that ventilation plant in critical care areas must not contain any material or substance that could support the growth of microorganisms.

A spokesperson for the hospital said: "The staff were very impressed with the professionalism and efficiency of the System Hygienics team. All works were completed on time and without any unplanned inconvenience to our patients."

To control the risk of infections in hospitals, unseen ventilation system ductwork surfaces must be cleaned regularly to prevent the build-up of dust and dirt composed of a mixture of organic compounds, including a high proportion of skin and hair. If left, this mix becomes a valuable nutrient for harmful micro-organisms such as MRSA and *Clostridium difficile*, which can easily become airborne and infect patients.

The JetVent system cleans the ductwork with negligible disruption to the day-to-day running of the building. Minimal access to ductwork is required, as up to 100 metres can be reached from one point. There is no leakage of contaminants, and cleaning is achieved quickly and efficiently. The cleaning process ensures hospitals meet the guidelines specified in the new HTM 03-01. ■

ASK - ABOUT HAND HYGIENE!

Hospital cleanliness has never been higher on the public agenda and campaigns that promote the importance of good hand hygiene are critical in reducing the risk of hospital associated infection. Sodexo Healthcare's ASK campaign aims to dramatically improve the level of hand cleanliness in hospitals across the country.

Since introducing ASK in 2004 to educate healthcare staff in effective hand hygiene practices, Sodexo has regularly updated the campaign's training procedures and supporting materials in accordance with the latest NHS guidelines on infection and contamination control.

Last year, the ASK campaign widened its focus to include the education of visitors to the healthcare environment and teamed up with former England cricket captain Alec Stewart, to launch the new phase of ASK at Queen's Hospital in Romford. Recognising that supporting staff in the provision of a clean and safe hospital environment depends not only on dedicated training procedures but also on clear communication with the public, the company is providing tailored ASK demonstrations at all of its healthcare sites to further raise awareness of the campaign.

In addition to posters with pictorial depictions of good hand hygiene practices, and staff badges urging people to ask them when they last washed their hands, Sodexo Healthcare employees are issued with a comprehensive package of visual training aids, take-away anti-bacterial gels, hand creams and hand-scanning devices for visitors.

Sodexo staff at Queen's Hospital were also the first to receive the company's new infection control passports, launched in conjunction with the ASK campaign. Designed to reinforce training procedures, the passports test employees' knowledge and understanding of infection and contamination control.

Jeff Brades, marketing director, said: "Visible hand hygiene campaigns, reinforces that everybody who enters the hospital has a duty of care to stem the spread these infections, gives patients and their relatives confidence that the hospital is doing all it can to combat hospital associated infection. The ASK campaign is simple to follow and has been a big hit with both patients and staff." ■

