Underscoring the evolution of wound care as a distinct medical specialty, manufacturers are looking to design and market patient-centered, best practice-based products that address clinical and fiscal concerns. One area of concern is pressure ulcer prevention and treatment — a high priority in terms of a growing population of elderly and increasingly stringent reimbursement regulations. In response, support surface nomenclature and innovation, for example, garnered a great deal of attention at the recent National Pressure Ulcer Advisory Panel conference. To better understand what trends are driving product development, OWM spoke with Brent Ashton, Global Marketing Operations Manager, and Marcello G. Napol, Global Business Director, Skin Integrity, spokespersons for 3M Skin & Wound Care, St. Paul, MN. 3M’s employees have hundreds of years of combined experience with wound care and related technologies across the company’s marketing, lab, and clinical divisions.

Trends can be uncovered in two ways — through observation (feedback provided to field sales and technical teams and by monitoring sales trends) and via surveys (polling customers). According to the company spokesmen, current product trends in wound care focus on low cost in use and ease of use.

One way to keep costs low is to design products that extend wear time, reducing the expense of labor while preserving quality of care. One example is 3M™ Tegaderm™ High Performance Foam Adhesive Dressing, an extended-wear dressing that manages exudate over a longer period of time; the dressings are designed to adhere while exudate evaporates out of the dressing. To address concerns that longer wear time can thwart the ability to assess wound healing, newer clear products (eg, 3M™ Tegaderm™ Absorbent Clear Acrylic Dressing) allow visualization of the wound beneath the dressing. Unlike traditional dressings, these new dressings do not need to be pulled back to monitor healing progress — plus, they remain clean and do not compromise skin integrity.

Other cost-lowering options include designing more concentrated products so less is needed and making some products available as single-dose packets to control the spread of infection and reduce waste. In addition, innovations in multidose packaging will feature new delivery systems that allow the patient to carry the product throughout the care continuum.

Ease of use is a consideration for several reasons. Clinician turnover, especially in long-term and home care, is a challenge in terms of technique training and mastery. To help clinicians more easily identify specific products depending on patient need, 3M recently updated its Cavilon™ Professional Skin Care product line with new packaging. Also, multilayer compression for venous ulcers involves the ability to wrap several layers of dressing. Some products are applied at 50% of full strength; for the inexperienced practitioner, this may be difficult to gauge. 3M’s Coban™ 2 Layer Compression System is applied at full strength to reduce application variability and to ensure the patient receives the proper amount of compression, regardless of clinician skill with compression wrapping.

Patient comfort continues to be a critical consideration, not just in terms of dressing fit and wear time, but also with regard to ingredients. As such, fragrance-free products with no added scents are gaining global popularity.

To ensure patient-centered, best practice-based care, companies know they must provide not just cost-effective products, but also a great deal of tech support that facilitates product ease of use. Manufacturers must be cognizant of and responsive to patient and caregiver needs and prove, repeatedly and with conviction, that while it is subject to the ebb and flow of trends, quality of care is not “trendy.”

What trends are you observing?

Please share! Contact the editor at bzeiger@hmpcommunications.com

This article was not subject to the Ostomy Wound Management peer-review process.