Catch the Spirit of Innovation

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ne the chief reasons I love working in healthcare is its pace of change and innovation. At the National Association For Continence (NAFC), we encourage consumers to periodically revisit their providers to discuss their bladder and bowel control problems because new solutions or options may be available since their last visit. Innovation is at the heart of the hope all professionals — educators, providers, and product developers — instill in the public.

According to the Advanced Medical Technology Association (AdvaMed), a trade organization representing more than 1,600 of the world's leading medical technology innovators and manufacturers of devices, diagnostic products, and medical information systems, the average life cycle for many products is only 18 months. Improvements based on feedback and ideas from clinicians frequently are incorporated to advance a device to its next generation or to create a completely new platform. Useful feedback requires manufacturers to clearly and objectively communicate new product attributes and train clinicians to use advancing technologies safely and effectively (in some cases, such training by manufacturers is required by the FDA). Only then will end users be able to provide valuable input.

Because I have worked in industry in new product development and launches for nearly two decades, I can assert that company-sponsored education and training are integral parts of marketing activities and on-going technical support. Expert clinicians often serve as consultants and instructors — designers of the hands-on curriculum for their peers and investigators for ongoing market surveillance. Appropriate disclosure of such relationships between companies and clinicians preserves the integrity of the role of the clinician, and manufacturer inservices. Be a part of the innovative spirit that brings greater value and safer, more reliable products to your current “gold standard,” get properly trained in their usage, collect the comparative data, and fairly assess their value. Consider being part of the team that evaluates new products and services and provide peer-to-peer education and objective input to the marketers.

Also, spend time this fall reviewing the product literature you obtained from exhibitors at the 41st annual Wound, Ostomy, Continence Nurses Society meeting. Request follow-up samples and manufacturer inservices. Be a part of the innovative spirit that brings greater value and safer, more reliable results to the patients you so faithfully serve.

References