

# Sechrist Industries

## Ed Pulwer, President and Chief Executive Officer and Bill Preuit, Senior Vice President of International Sales and Marketing



Chimere G. Holmes

Utilizing his passion for the research and development of new life-saving medical technologies, mechanical engineer Ron Sechrist founded Sechrist Industries in 1973. From the beginning, Sechrist has defined its brand with a core set of values — ie, integrity, relationships, service, respect, and dedication. Today, Sechrist Industries comprises a team of distinguished professionals who work strategically to identify, develop, and sustain a worldwide competitive offering of high-quality technological solutions to the healthcare community.

In July 2009, Ed Pulwer was named President and Chief Executive Officer of Sechrist Industries. One of the main strategies for growth was to increase its business focus on international markets. This initiative led to the appointment of Bill Preuit, Senior Vice President of International Sales and Marketing. The transition affirmed the importance the company places on the growing list of applications for hyperbaric oxygen therapy all over the world.

Ed joined the company with more than 25 years of experience with medical technology. Most recently, Ed was Cardinal Health's Senior Operating Executive for the respiratory care business. "My primary area of responsibility was ventilation and cardiopulmonary technology," he says. "Before my tenure with Cardinal Health, I was the Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer for Viasys Healthcare, which was a New York stock exchange company acquired by Cardinal Health in July 2007. When we started the company, my key initiatives became my major accomplishment — that is, to create a global company that would become the leader in mechanical ventilation."

Not only is Sechrist the leading manufacturer of monoplace hyperbaric oxygen chambers, but they also manufacture life support neonatal ventilators and gas mixing products that deliver various concentrations of oxygen to patients. These products are used throughout the hospital and have been an integral part of Sechrist's business for their hospital partners and users for more than 30 years. The company's monoplace hyperbaric oxygen chambers have been used in the treatment of patients suffering from a variety of diseases including non-healing wounds, necrotizing soft tissue infections, thermal burns, skin grafts and flaps. These are just a few of the 13 indications that the FDA has approved for hyperbaric oxygen chambers.

Every intricate detail involved with the hyperbaric chambers from the manufacturing process to actual installation is done with precision and care. "We've earned the reputation as the



Ed Pulwer



Bill Preuit

worldwide leader in quality, safety, and value,” Ed says. “We manufacture all our products on site. In doing so, we control all the processes of product manufacturing from design, production, installation, and service. Our hyperbaric systems have provided life-healing therapy in the treatment of patients with chronic wound injuries, especially those with diabetic wounds of the lower extremities.”

“Sechrist reinvests a substantial amount of revenue in research and development and continues to support research with key leaders in wound care and hyperbaric oxygen therapy (HBOT). We make five different chambers — our customers can choose from the standard pneumatic system to chambers utilizing electronic controls for operator convenience. These systems also utilize an oxygen conservation system that results in up to 65% cost reduction and significantly reduces the gas noise inside the chamber. Sechrist’s hyperbaric ventilator can be used with monoplace chambers for patients who need continuous life support during the hyperbaric treatment. This is the only ventilator available with use for monoplace chambers.”

Working alongside his dedicated team, Ed’s central focus in reaching his goals is to always improve the overall patient quality of life. “Our stakeholders include care providers and patients who rely on the quality and service of our products. We are committed to provide our employees an entrepreneurial environment that stimulates and rewards their creativity and innovation. As I look at this business, it reminds me of the early years in my career — developing new products through innovation and introducing them into the marketplace to provide therapies that will heal or improve patient quality of life,” he says.

A growing list of indications for hyperbaric oxygen in other countries makes HBOT a critical therapy in patient care. Appointing Bill Preuit was strategic. “It is our goal to work with our international partners to bring hyperbaric medicine to those markets,” Ed says. “We believe the international arena represents an area for substantial growth for Sechrist; having Bill Preuit lead our international efforts will enhance expansion of our sales efforts across the globe.”

Bill Preuit’s career in the medical business began in the clinical respiratory therapy arena in the mid-1970s when Bill worked in hospitals in the US and overseas. “Ten years of hospital employment with its varied experiences working with both hospital administration and healthcare providers has given me a clear advantage in the medical products industry,” Bill says. “After an international assignment in 1983, I transitioned from a practicing clinician to a product sales manager and was a jack-of-all-trades for a small start-up company that manufactured metabolic measurement parts and a pulmonary function system. Over the last 25 years, I’ve held various positions in sales and marketing both in the US and abroad. Just before joining Sechrist, I completed a three-and-a-half-year expatriate assignment based in Hong Kong as Vice President of International Sales and Marketing for Asia Pacific for Cardinal Health. The majority of my 25 years have been spent in the international marketplace managing a global distributor network. Living in Hong Kong was by far one of the

best experiences. In the 80s, I lived in Saudi Arabia for 3 years, and in the 90s I lived in the Netherlands for 2 years. Each one has been a unique experience but I have to say that Hong Kong was quite exciting.”

Although he’s only been with the Sechrist team for a few months, Bill’s transition has been quick and successful. “I worked in the medical product industry since the early 80s but mostly in the cardiopulmonary, critical care, and neurodiagnostic marketplace,” he says. “I find the hyperbaric market is a challenge unlike my previous markets. The key difference is that the benefit of ventilators, pulmonary functions, and neurodiagnostic equipment — what it does and how it helps healthcare — is pretty well accepted in the industry. You don’t need to educate people of their value. However, HBOT may be accepted in the US for wound care and the other 12 already approved indications, but this is not necessarily the same case in other countries around the world. I recently learned that in some developed countries, hospitals do not currently have the option of HBOT, but must rely on surgical remedies for unmanageable wounds such as diabetic foot ulcers, which most likely result in amputation. I am looking forward to making a difference, not only in terms of sales for Sechrist, but in providing better healthcare in countries around the world. This is a new personal challenge for me.”

Forging ahead in the international marketplace is a business venture that will undoubtedly reap tremendous success. There are new partners to gain and venues to explore. Bill sees nothing but promise. “I think we are making some good progress because international sales of hyperbaric chambers are trending higher this year than in previous years,” he notes. “Currently, we are formulating our strategic international priorities to first focus on countries where HBOT is well accepted. Subsequently, we will concentrate on countries where educating providers on the benefits are likely to return positive results. One of the most important components in every distributor strategy begins with finding the best business partner in each country willing to enthusiastically promote Sechrist products and provide service and support to our customers.”

In today’s tumultuous economy and the impending healthcare reform, Sechrist, like virtually every medical technology company, has had to adapt to the current economic conditions. “Because of this current situation, many medical institutions’ ability to obtain capital for new and planned purchases have been postponed until they see improvement occurring in the economy and once funding becomes more available,” Ed explains. “We are working with our clients to help them obtain funding (if necessary) through financial groups in order to provide the services and meet the needs of their patients utilizing our products. As a result of being a manufacturer of a pressure vessel for human occupancy (the monoplace hyperbaric chamber), our manufacturing facilities operate in accordance with the FDA, and meet other required codes and standards in the US and abroad — proof that we have a highly regulated product. I’ve been in the industry for many years, and I’ve never seen this many regulations required by this many agencies for a single medical device.”

With regards to both the President's healthcare requirement and the ever-changing needs of their customers, Sechrist has major plans, including four product launches in store for 2010. "Innovation is a very important part of our business future," says Ed. "We are working very hard to ensure we deliver new products as frequently as possible. One of the four new products falls in line with President Obama's electronic health records requirement; other products focus on chambers and safety, where there are many requirements as part of the process. The technical people who operate these systems need to be well educated, trained, and fundamentally understand how these systems work."

Bill anticipates jumpstarting new major marketing incentives to garner a larger audience. Currently, the company subscribes to a commercial service that monitors more than 140

publications and transfers the information to their business partners and customers. "From an international point of view, just getting the word out about the benefits of HBOT can be a challenge," he says. "We take steps to inform our sales team, business partners, and partners through company websites and commercial news service providers."

Sechrist plans to hold more focus seminars and workshops in their targeted countries with the utilization of experts in the field of HBOT. The company also will participate in local and international seminars. From its humble beginnings to the present, Sechrist continues to fulfill healthcare opportunities that improve the quality of patient care by providing a non-invasive therapy, and add convenience and efficiency for the practitioner, in addition to providing high quality and cost effective technology that reaches a wide range of patients in the global market. ■

The Sechrist 3600E hyperbaric chamber, available in 5 signature colors, is equipped with the latest in Sechrist technology, the Electronic Control Module that significantly increases oxygen conservation, patient comfort and patient safety.

- **Sechrist's Oxygen Conservation System provides the following benefits:**

1. Using the O<sub>2</sub> Conservation Mode, up to 65% less oxygen will be consumed per treatment compared to standard pneumatic chambers
2. Reduced oxygen supply requirements
3. 95% oxygen level within 13 minutes at a minimum compression purge rate of 400L/min
4. Comfortable noise levels during the pressure plateau

Sechrist's Oxygen Conservation Mode significantly reduces the amount of oxygen consumed during a treatment. A monoplace hyperbaric oxygen treatment that begins under ambient air conditions requires a high oxygen flow in order to eliminate the presence of nitrogen within the chamber. Once the nitrogen has been purged from the chamber and the internal oxygen concentration has exceeded 95%, high flows are no longer needed to maintain the patient's saturation level. The Sechrist 3600E automatically switches from an initial high flow nitrogen purge system to a lower ventilation flow during the plateau stage of the treatment. Using a lower sustaining purge flow can allow savings of up to 65% of the oxygen that would normally be consumed. The lower sustaining flow also provides the benefit of lower noise levels for the patient.

- **Sechrist Comfort Profile compresses the chamber at a variable rate that allows more comfortable ear pressure equalization.**

The Sechrist Comfort Profile automatically adjusts the compression rate throughout the compression phase of a treatment cycle - the first one-third of the compression phase. The slower compression rate allows the patient to accommodate for initial changes in inner-ear pressure gradually. The Comfort Profile then smoothly ramps up the rate to reach the desired Pressure Set. This method allows for maximum patient saturation exposure without exposure to possibly discomforting compression rates.

- **Safe State**

The Electronic Control Module provides additional unique safety features. In the unlikely event that any of the electronic or pneumatic systems fail, the ECM will automatically create a Safe State environment. This Safe State, announced by audible and visual alarm indicators, will terminate the treatment and safely decompress the chamber at the purge flow rate in effect at the time of the safe state condition. In addition, the ECM monitors the system for safe operation and will alert the operator to any unusual operating characteristics or system errors.

