

# Source isolation strategy

## Super absorbent products help to optimise practice and increase efficiency

No matter how big or small a healthcare facility, Best Practice is vitally important in helping to control infection. Perhaps even more so in critical nursing conditions such as source isolation.

Gary Thirkell, infection prevention and control nurse specialist at The Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust, told *Inside Hospitals*: “As a six-hospital, 2,184-bedded trust, we can have a substantial number of cases at any one time being nursed in source isolation.

“In 2008 we - like others - had significant CDI and MRSA challenges. In source isolation we were having to bring the bodily fluids out to take them to the sluice. Nursing staff were having to go through the whole process of gloving, transporting to the sluice, disposal, de-gloving, washing hands, returning to the area and re-gloving.

“People were walking around with bedpans and other bodily fluids, which meant there was always the likelihood of spillages.”

Gary explained: “We introduced SafetyGel as part of our source isolation strategy. The SafetyGel sachet opens on contact with liquid and the granules quickly absorb the fluid as they turn into a gel. Each sachet absorbs up to 1.2 litres of fluid and stabilises into a gel in one or two minutes.”

“Then it simply goes into the infectious waste in the isolation area. There’s no need to carry



**Best Practice partnership:** Gary Thirkell, infection prevention and control nurse specialist and Lynn Hatfield, infection prevention and control nurse, at The Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust

the liquid to the sluice. It’s used in urinals, vomit bowls and washbowls. It’s a simple and effective product to use.

“This new way of doing it was reducing risk and maximising efficiency. It’s about optimal practice and reducing nursing footfall, reducing potential contamination outside the room.

“We also use SafetyGel in source isolation cohort facilities.”

But introducing a new technique does not always lead to the same level of implementation. As Gary explained: “We introduced it and expected people to do certain things, to use the product in the optimum way. But one size does not fit all.

“If you put it into a 400-bed trust it might be relatively easy to ensure everyone follows the right technique. You might be able to train the team in certain hospitals in one day. When you introduce a new way of doing things into a ‘beast’ like Leeds it’s a completely different matter.

“We have to look at things from the perspective of a large organisation - six hospitals, 2,184 beds. As city centre hospitals we have a large workforce, so constant training is required.”

Gary said: “Initially, there was limited guidance from the company. What used to happen was that staff would use too many sachets or not wait long enough for the gel to form. At the time we were using solutions

from a number of different manufacturers. There were issues that SafetyGel clearly addressed.

“We commented on the lack of guidance and training when SafetyGel’s global sales manager, Marc Wilson, and corporate brand manager, Mark Johnson, came in. They put forward further instructions that are more graphic, more pictorial, and easy to understand. They redesigned the sachet dispenser box and are developing a poster as well.

“We were using far too much product with the other manufacturers,” said Gary. “SafetyGel increased the size and content of the sachet. Which means that staff now avoid using

two sachets, so the product’s used appropriately. Staff are not wasting money, so there are cost savings for the organisation too.”

Gary said: “When SafetyGel visited, I asked Lynn Hatfield, who used the product in her day job, to accompany them and explain the issues.”

Lynn, now an infection prevention and control nurse, said: “As a project support nurse for infection prevention I went with the company to different areas - elderly medicine, respiratory, liver and hepatobiliary unit.”

“We went to review staff’s knowledge of SafetyGel. To see when they were using it and in what situations. That’s when it became evident that not all areas were using it efficiently.

“Another issue was that some people were putting the gel into the macerator and it was being wrongly blamed for blockages. Recently independent trials have shown that blockages don’t occur as long as the machine manufacturer’s guidelines are followed. This is very important of course for most users but in our source isolation systems, our guidance is still that it’s disposed of as clinical waste in isolation areas. This keeps everything in the room.

“It was really useful on the wards we visited and the company felt it was helpful to get the feedback from users.”

Following the visit in late July this year, SafetyGel responded very quickly. Sachet size was optimised, increasing from 4gms to 7gms. This has delivered a more cost-effective use of the product.

New, more pictorial, source isolation-based packaging and a poster have been developed, together with guidance cards for staff.

Explaining her role, Lynn said: “Since January this year I’ve been a project nurse and was key worker for infection prevention and control whilst on the ward. I became an infection prevention and control nurse at the beginning of October. Gary asked me, as someone who’d just come from one of the areas - fresh off the ward - to give my opinions.

“As a project nurse I attended new staff induction training.



**Fast-acting:** the sachet opens on contact with liquid and the gel stabilises within two minutes



**Re-designed:** the SafetyGel sachet dispenser now reflects the source isolation practice at Leeds

During the training I've explained how staff would use SafetyGel for source isolation. It helps to prevent spread of infection ensuring everything is contained within that room."

Gary said: "Lynn has done work looking at how SafetyGel may help to avoid slips and trips on wards when used with washbowls. While washbowls and urinals are being moved people may spill and we have a potential slip and trip hazard and a possible source of infection."

"While doing this, we realised we'd picked up other practice issues regarding the decanting of washbowl water down wash-hand basins, which allowed training on this matter."

SafetyGel is available as loose granules. These offer a quick and convenient solution to spillages. Just apply the granules to the edge of the spill, then evenly over the surface. Wait for two minutes while the gel stabilises before cleaning up.

Outlining the Best Practice, Gary said: "The use of SafetyGel minimises risk of spillage during source isolation. All fluid is disposed of using SafetyGel in source isolation - urinals vomit bowls and washbowls - it enables disposal as clinical waste. We try to keep everything in that room."

"There are source isolation areas that have an en suite. Where they do, staff dispose of the bodily fluid down the toilet. SafetyGel is used in those areas that don't have an en suite. The subsequent cleaning of the toilet meets National Standards."

Lynn added: "SafetyGel is used everywhere we have source isolation across the trust. It's standard practice."

Describing the other changes that the company has implemented to suit Leeds, Gary said: "The original SafetyGel information guidance was quite general. We wanted it to be Leeds-centric. So it's focussed around source isolation practice."

"SafetyGel have re-designed



**Washbowls too:** SafetyGel pads have a four litre absorption capacity

the packaging and produced a poster and information card. To ensure it's always to hand, the dispensing box is designed to be hung from the pulp racking system. At the same time, the new training cards will be given as guidance to staff who will be using the product. The card fits into the back of the staff name badge, so it's always handy as a reminder of the correct techniques."

Gary added: "We like SafetyGel. It fits the purpose we need. It performs very well and it's easy to use."

"We want companies to work collaboratively with us, like SafetyGel have, to optimise practice and increase efficiency."

A recent addition to the SafetyGel range is a revolutionary absorbent pad. Designed to meet a wide range of health and hygiene challenges, the SafetyGel pad will absorb up to four litres of unwanted or dangerous liquid in less than a minute. It can be applied to spills, used in washbowls, waste bags and sharps containers - indeed any receptacle where there is a risk of dangerous spillage.

With several new developments due to enhance the range, Gary said: "I was impressed with SafetyGel's future innovations as previewed at the IPS conference - urinals and washbowls pre-gelled with SafetyGel - no need for a sachet."



**Innovation:** a pre-gelled range, including slipper pan and commode will be introduced in 2015



pre-gelled pulp items, including slipper pans, urinals and commodes."

The full range of SafetyGel products is available from NHS Supply Chain.

For further information, e-mail [gary.thirkell@leedsth.nhs.uk](mailto:gary.thirkell@leedsth.nhs.uk)

Alternatively, call SafetyGel on 0843 216 6262 or visit [www.safetygel.co.uk](http://www.safetygel.co.uk)

**ENQUIRY NO. 401**

## How it works

SafetyGel is a super absorbent product that helps prevent spillages by solidifying liquids, including bodily fluids. It contains the liquid in a semi-solid

gel that's easy to transport and dispose of in a macerator or clinical waste sack.

### Reduces the risk of infection

It helps to reduce the risk of cross infection that can occur when bodily fluids are moved from the patient or commode to the sluice room or are spilled onto beds or floors. SafetyGel helps to prevent this by converting these

liquids into a stable gel.

### Saves staff time and saves money

Spills of bodily fluids are estimated to cost the NHS £43m per year

in labour and laundry costs.

Avoiding these spills by using SafetyGel can reduce these costs by 87% and improve staff efficiencies.

### Improves patient dignity

Patients are saved the embarrassment and indignity that follows an accidental spill of bodily fluids in the bed or toilet areas.

The SafetyGel range includes loose granules in tubs and shaker pots, absorbent sachets and the highly absorbent pads. It is available through NHS Supply Chain and on NHS prescription.

