Choosing Patient Prep

What are the top three considerations surgical professionals should make when choosing patient prep products?

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1. Efficacy. When you think about it, we are outnumbered by the bacteria on the skin. For every skin cell, there are 10 bacteria that live on that one cell. So, we are vastly outnumbered. Therefore, picking a product that is effective at killing the skin dwelling microorganisms, which has been shown to be a contributor to certain HAIs, should be priority number one. Studies have shown that Chlorhexidine Gluconate (CHG) and alcohol combination products do this better than more traditional products on the market. The product should be backed by a significant body of evidence that actually shows that it does what it’s supposed to do.

2. Ease of use. Because different clinicians have a different level of expertise in prepping the skin properly, it is important that a product be easy to use and the technique for applying the skin antiseptic is easy. Can the application technique be repeated consistently? Is the product easy to use? Looking for products that don’t come in multiple parts or require multiple steps is very important. Most of these products have been studied using a particular technique, so being able to reproduce that application technique becomes key.

3. Product size and color. Because there are different needs for skin antisepsis throughout the hospital or ambulatory surgery center, it’s important that the product is offered in a variety of applicators that provides the appropriate amount of solution for the prep area required. For example, some skin antiseptic needs in a hospital only require a 2” x 2” prep coverage area. Others, for example, where a clinician needs to prep the entire thoracic area would require a larger or multiple applicators to achieve the desired prepping goal. So, look for products that provide the best formulation and that also come in a variety and range of applicator sizes. Furthermore, as it relates to the surgical theater, make sure the product is colored

so you can see where you prepped.

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