Keep Cool In The OR

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Staying cool and comfortable during procedures isn't just a preference for today's surgeon. It's a necessity.

That means surgeons demand reliable, flexible, and easy-to-use cooling vests that will assist them in their efforts to conduct their work without being distracted by uncomfortably warm temperatures in operating rooms. Fortunately, a number of technological advancements have been made to cooling vests over the course of recent years that will allow for both better performance and a longer product lifespan.

"Above all else, surgeons demand a cost-effective, high-performance vest system that allows them to be cool and comfortable during surgery," says Jacob Graessle, VP and surgical cooling specialist for Polar Products, which specializes in the design and manufacture of body cooling and hot and cold therapy systems.

When it comes to searching for the right cooling vest, surgeons have every right to demand uncompromising quality. After all, they need to be able to perform at a high level in ORs where temperatures are kept warm for patient safety. Since no two surgeons are exactly alike, cooling vests on the market today need to be comfortable, easy to use, flexible, and durable, as well as offer adjustable cooling temperature.

"The (vest) also must be lightweight and cool evenly across the body," adds John LaDue, Director CoolVest Surgical, Shafer Enterprises, a provider of temperature monitoring and patient warming technologies.

According to LaDue, his company's CoolVest product has four zones for evenly-distributed cooling and patented non-kink tubing to prevent cooling zones from being closed off as a result of wearing heavy lead aprons and other restrictive surgical garments.

Custom performance is also a critical feature of today's cooling vest. Polar Products offers self-contained portable cooling units with wheels and a retractable handle, which provide an alternative to carts. Furthermore, the company offers chiller systems to eliminate the need for ice, larger cooling reservoirs, and multi-person systems.

Likewise, CoolShirt Systems now offers its COOL DOG "iceless" systems. It uses electronic cooling without compressors to ensure an efficient and quiet performance while allowing users to program it according to their temperature requirements.

According to Graessle, surgeons sometimes have unique needs and demands, and providers of cooling vests need to know how to meet them.

“Each hospital presents an individual circumstance,” he says.

Different styles of vests also help account for the fact that there are many different kinds of surgical situations and environments. CoolShirt Systems, for example, offers a premium jacket-length vest for long procedures where the surgeon must remain standing, a mid-waist-length vest for shorter surgeries or those where the surgeon may sit, a premium-hooded-jacket-length vest for one where the surgeon may require additional cooling capacity, and a disposable vest to cut down on the proliferation of unwanted bacteria in the OR.

"We use high-grade materials and long-life fans," says LaDue.

The material that makes up the cooling vest needs to provide durability and comfort, and surgeons must be able to choose from several different options. Polar Products, for example, offers a fitted vest manufactured with performance fabric with a slight stretch to offer a snug fit with cooling energy right up against the surgeon’s body types.

When it comes to OR temperature management, surgeons have a lot of options to address their needs for flexible, adjustable, comfortable cooling solutions. However, as technology has improved over time, providers of these solutions continue to offer more and better products aimed at keeping their customers both cool and comfortable while they work.

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