

in touch

The Ansell Newsletter

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Dear reader,

With the summer holidays long gone, diaries have filled up again with lots of autumn and winter to-do's. It is no different at Ansell. Everyone is working hard to achieve the goals outlined for the coming months: continually enhance existing solutions and launch new ones, deliver outstanding customer services, strengthen the ties with all of you during regular visits and trade fairs, and much more.

But let me, before expounding on today and tomorrow, first take a minute to look back on the past. Fiscal year 2008, which ended last June, was a very good year for Ansell. The company was happy to welcome many new customers, from an increasing number of new countries, and continual efforts in R&D resulted in a good number of product launches. That Ansell's dedication to innovation, quality and customer-intimacy is a sound approach, was also confirmed by Ansell's partners who were all happy to continue their partnerships with Ansell.

For the new fiscal 2009, Ansell wants to stay true to its founding mission: to be a trusted partner that provides reliable, innovative and high-quality solutions and services that provide optimal protection and comfort. To achieve that aim, Ansell cooperates closely with specialist associations. After all, frequent contact with the users of medical gloves is a great way to keep the finger on the pulse of their changing needs and wishes. Their feedback is a great source of inspiration. As are the feedback, reports and studies from independent experts.

Scientific studies on the comparison between Natural Rubber Latex (NRL) and synthetic gloves, for example, are at the root of a recent Ansell whitepaper on the topic. Read the summary in this In Touch! Elsewhere in this issue, you will discover how 2008 tests with the scientifically-developed FITkit® testing method have demonstrated 'undetectable' allergen levels in the popular Gammex® range of surgical gloves. Clear proof that Ansell is on a continual quest to protect you to the max!

In the mean time: enjoy reading this brand new edition!

Werner Heintz

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Editorial

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Gauging the hand protection needs of orthopaedic and trauma surgeons

End-user feedback is a most valuable source of inspiration for Ansell. It is one of the credos that the company put into practice during its first-ever participation in the annual Congress of the European Federation of National Associations of Orthopaedics and Traumatology (EFORT). Besides presenting its extensive range of surgical glove solutions, Ansell also conducted a mini-survey among the participants.

EFORT is the umbrella organization that links all European national orthopaedics associations. Its annual congress, which took place in Nice, France, from 29th May - June 1st this year, is the place to be to exchange scientific information and share experiences. For Ansell too, such a high-level event is a great opportunity to keep the finger on the pulse of what's moving in orthopaedic and traumatology surgery.



Meeting the surgeon's needs

In a short survey, Ansell asked orthopaedic and trauma surgeons about specific hand protection needs. Do they double glove to ensure extra protection? What are the consequences of frequent disinfecting? Is grip a major issue during orthopaedic surgery and do the gloves they wear provide sufficient grip? The survey results showed that information on protection levels offered by surgical gloves is a concern for most orthopaedic and trauma surgeons. Also sufficient grip in wet environments, skin related issues like dryness and more information on allergies appear to be fields of major interest.

Ansell proudly presented the EFORT visitors a wide range of solutions that can help solve these problems: the [Gammex®PF Underglove®](#) for comfortable double gloving, the [Gammex® PF HydraSoft®](#) with built-in hydration and the fully latex-free [Gammex® PF IsoDerm®](#). The interest shown in these solutions and the enthusiasm about the new XXL Gammex® PF (size 9.5) clearly proved that Ansell's products cater to the needs of its end-users.

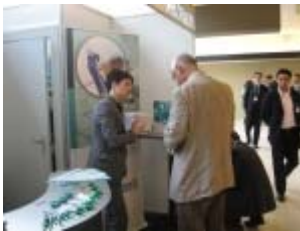
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Ansell highlights cytostatics expertise at ESSO

With the global burden of cancer constantly increasing, the risk of exposure to cytostatics is rising exponentially. At the 14th congress of the European Society of Surgical Oncology (ESSO), Europe's major surgical oncology event, Ansell demonstrated its firm commitment to optimally protect healthcare workers and patients against the hazards of cytostatic drugs.

On September 11th last, over 800 surgical oncologists from 71 countries traveled to the Dutch city of The Hague to attend the 14th ESSO congress. For over 27 years now, the European Society of Surgical Oncology has been promoting good practice, knowledge and education in cancer surgery throughout Europe. Every two years, ESSO members come together for a high-level forum where experience and know-how are exchanged. The 2008 edition attracted several surgeons and nurses from Russia, Poland and Serbia which did not visit the congress in earlier years.



Cytostatics: a key component of cancer treatment

As surgery is a key component of cancer treatment, surgical oncologists have a great responsibility towards their patients. The job requires a great deal of expertise and constant learning, which is eagerly fostered by ESSO. More than cancer surgery, however, ESSO wishes to promote awareness about every aspect of cancer treatment, including the potentially hazardous cytostatics drugs. Although only the surgeons involved in HIPEC treatments (Hyperthermic Intraperitoneal Chemoperfusion) are in regular contact with cytostatics, the approach of the drugs was of clear interest to all ESSO congress visitors.

Ansell's expertise

For Ansell, the event was therefore an ideal opportunity to show this group how Ansell Healthcare has been carrying out in-depth research into glove permeation by cytostatics for some time now. Together with distributor Stopler, Ansell manned a booth where it promoted the Ansell Cytostatics Permeation Programme (ACPP)

Developed to measure the dynamic cytostatics permeation level of surgical gloves, the ACPP has in the meantime been deployed to test permeation levels of industrial gloves used during the manipulation of cytostatics, e.g. in laboratories and hospital pharmacies. Eye-catcher was the Gammex® PF XP™, which has been ACPP-tested to withstand a range of cytostatics for up to 60 minutes.

Valuable end-user feedback

The new glove, just like the ACPP protocol, was much appreciated by visitors to the Ansell booth. The feedback was particularly favorable from surgeons from countries where the reconstitution of cytostatics takes place in the operating room. For Ansell, this feedback and the comments of all the other visitors to the booth were extremely useful. The participation in ESSO proved, once more, how a specialists' congress is an ideal forum to gauge end-users' experiences and opinions - as a starting-point for further enhancements and innovations to Ansell's solutions.

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Head nurses and OR managers introduced to latex allergy management

B. Braun, a world-leading supplier of medical products and services, shares many common values with Ansell. Just like Ansell, B. Braun is on a constant quest for quality, innovation and knowledge and is committed to improving safety in hospitals. Consequently, Ansell was happy to exchange its expertise on latex allergy management during a recent B. Braun event in Nussdorf am Attersee, near Salzburg (Austria), on 11 September last.

In line with its mission to share knowledge and educate healthcare workers around proper hospital practices, B. Braun regularly organizes congresses and seminars for particular groups of healthcare workers. For its September event in Austria, the company had invited Ansell to give a presentation on latex allergy management. The company was proud to delegate Pascale Dewaegeneire, Theatre Manager at the general hospital of Sedan, France, as its guest speaker.



A key step towards unpowdered gloves

Around 60 head nurses and OR managers from the Czech Republic and Slovakia attended the presentation. In her lecture, Pascale explained all about the origins of latex and latex allergies, the alternatives to Natural Rubber Latex (NRL) gloves and Ansell's leadership position in latex allergy management. Wherever possible, she referred to [AnsellCares](#), Ansell's educational program, to inform the participants about the topic. As most of the attendants still don powdered gloves, Pascale stressed how the cornstarch powder used in powdered medical gloves plays a key role in latex-induced allergic reactions. Her eye-opening stories of how hospitals that switch to non-powdered alternatives saw the level of latex allergy drop substantially, surely inspired all the attendants.

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Why latex and synthetic are both great materials for high-quality gloves

"What is it, exactly, that causes allergic reactions to Natural Rubber Latex (NRL)?", "Are there side effects to the synthetic alternatives?", and "What is the environmental and economic impact of latex versus synthetic?". These questions, and much more besides, are answered in a recent [Ansell paper](#) that compares NRL gloves with synthetic materials. Its findings in a nutshell: latex and synthetic gloves will continue to co-exist. And rightly so!

NRL gloves have been around for quite some time now. In the early 1990s, their use increased dramatically due to concerns about various transmittable diseases. A growing number of studies also pointed to the rising prevalence of allergic reactions to NRL gloves among healthcare workers. As a consequence, some hospitals decided to drastically switch to non-latex alternatives. A changeover that may have been rather hasty, as it was often done without full consideration of all of the factors involved, such as glove functionality and costs, both directly and on the environment. Granted, the figures released on latex allergies (up to 20 % incidence!) were frightening in the late 1990s. However, many reports at the time frequently confused specific NRL allergy (type I) with skin irritation, irritant contact dermatitis or type IV allergic reactions, some of which can occur as well with synthetic gloves.

Conversion to powder-free, low-allergen gloves

Still, the complaints and alarming studies on latex allergies had a positive effect: the world woke up to the problem of latex sensitivity.

Changes were introduced in the production process for NRL gloves and many hospitals implemented latex-sensitivity protocols. Powder-free NRL gloves became the norm as soon as it was understood that the powdered corn starch on latex gloves might be a vehicle of latex allergens. For years now, Ansell has been investing greatly in achieving that aim. Today, its online leaching and high temperature post-washing procedures during powder-free NRL glove manufacturing processes greatly reduce the allergen content. The results are rewarding. Over the past few years, hospitals with a strict policy to stick to powder-free NRL gloves have experienced a sharp drop in the prevalence of type I allergic reactions to NRL. The incidence is considered to be lower than 1% among healthcare workers today, not very different from the percentage in the general population. Prevalence is higher in certain groups, such as people who had multiple childhood exposures or who are allergic to certain fruits. Which implies that type I reactions in healthcare workers and patients can be partly anticipated by appropriate questioning.

Optimal barrier protection and low environmental impact

Latex allergies is, in other words, not as big a problem as was first thought. Moreover, there are other reasons for sticking to NRL gloves wherever possible. When it comes to barrier protection, for example, latex gloves are at least as good as most types of synthetic gloves. And, last but not least, there is a 'green' argument pro latex. Latex is a renewable resource and rubber trees remove large amounts of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere each year. Moreover, rubber products are biodegradable and if NRL gloves are incinerated, they do not produce toxic emissions.

Latex is a good choice

The landmark conclusion of all the above is clear: "Latex remains a good material for glove manufacture and should continue to be used." Healthcare workers or patients who do suffer from type I allergies will, of course, find a wide range of highly protective and comfortable synthetic alternatives in Ansell's product offering. The choice between latex and synthetic is, in other words, totally dependent upon the application for which the glove is used and the possible allergenicity of the healthcare workers and patients donning the glove.

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Recent tests with FITkit® demonstrate 'undetectable' allergen levels in Ansell's Gammex® range

On page 3 you could read how powder-free Natural Rubber Latex (NRL) gloves remain a good choice for barrier protection. For years now, Ansell has been on a quest to minimize the onset of type I allergic reactions to these gloves. Its state-of-the-art manufacturing processes guarantee particularly low levels of allergens. How it is so sure about that? Ansell relies on the most accurate NRL allergen testing method available on today's market: FITkit®. Such tests have recently reconfirmed that our efforts to minimize latex allergies are bearing fruit.

To truly understand the allergenicity of NRL gloves, we have to return to their natural source: the rubber tree. The liquid latex extruded from the rubber tree contains over 200 proteins. 13 of them have been identified as allergens, i.e. components that can cause allergic reactions. Many proteins degrade, denature or lose their activity during the rubber manufacturing process but some manage to survive the extensive washing and leaching procedures. According to current literature, it is mainly proteins known as heveins (Hev b1, Hev b3, Hev b5 and Hev b6.02) that retain their allergenic properties and are often found in extracts of latex gloves. Ansell decided to control the levels of these four allergens, as an essential step towards minimizing the allergenicity of its NRL gloves. The methodology used for these measurements is the innovative FITkit® tests.

A worldwide research standard

FITkit® is the first-ever immunological test methodology to identify and quantify clinically relevant levels of Hev b1, Hev b3, Hev b5 and Hev b6.02 in NRL products, including barrier protective gloves. The tests use specific monoclonal antibodies specially developed against the four major latex allergens known to be present in NRL products. By using highly purified and characterized allergens and monoclonal antibodies, FITkit® guarantees sensitive, accurate and reliable results without interference or cross reactions with other substances. It is this sensitivity, accuracy and reliability that set this method apart from all the other tests on the market. FITkit® makes it possible to directly measure all the relevant allergens individually, as a separate test is available for measuring each of them.

Best-in-class manufacturing approach

The FITkit® test is the result of many years' research and studies by a couple of leading Finnish scientists working in the area of NRL allergies. They developed the methodology in close partnership with major glove manufacturers, including Ansell. At Ansell, the innovative method is the standard procedure to measure the allergen levels of powder-free NRL gloves. That Ansell's constant quest for low allergen content works, has recently been proven again by FITkit® tests on its Gammex® range of surgical gloves. Thanks to the intensive post-washing and leaching procedures during their manufacturing process, the [Gammex® PF](#), [Gammex® PF Underglove®](#), [Gammex® PF MicroThin®](#), [Gammex® PF HydraSoft®](#) and the new [Gammex® PF XP®](#) all showed undetectable levels of allergens.

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