



Supporting Documentation
On Disposable Blood Pressure Cuffs

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Use of Disposable Blood Pressure Cuffs on the Increase

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The demand for after-market blood pressure cuffs [1] is on the increase as changing demographics, health care policies and medical services shift to offer routine blood pressure monitoring within and outside of the hospital. Chart 1 provides a display of reusable and disposable blood pressure cuffs by the leading manufacturer of blood pressure cuffs in the U.S., Critikon, a division of GE Medical Systems.



Chart 1

Changing Demographics

Advances in the field of medicine have led to an increase in life expectancy, with many people easily exceeding the national average of 76.7 years of age. In addition to advancing life expectancy, the number of people aged 45 years and older now account for over 77 million, projected to reach 83 million over the next decade.

These changing demographics are moving a sizeable population pool into higher illness categories, which will require more medical interventions including the use of blood pressure monitoring in the future. The aging baby-boomer population is moving into the age range when increased medical treatment for age related illnesses such as chronic congestive heart failure, cardiopulmonary diseases and degenerative autoimmune diseases, such as diabetes and thyroid deficiency, tumors, cancers and other debilitating illnesses is most often required. Many of these ailments are also exacerbated by weight gain, a common side ailment of aging.

Testing for Hypertension on the Rise

According to the American Heart Association hypertension affects as many as 50 million Americans a year and has been known to be the result of close to 45,000 deaths in the United States. It has also been found to be a contributing factor in another 118,000 individuals. Defined as a systolic pressure above 140 mm Hg, or a diastolic pressure above 90 mm Hg, hypertension has been shown to be a high risk factor for cardiovascular disease. Although hypertension can manifest at any age this diagnosis is most often rendered as individuals move into middle age and will contribute to an increased demand for blood pressure monitoring over the coming years. As shown in Chart 2, a physician is using blood pressure as a means to monitor patients with hypertension. (The photo is courtesy of Neopharmica.)



Chart 2

Shift to Preventive Care Contributes to Demand

An increase in the chronicity of heart ailments places tremendous medical and socioeconomic burdens on the community. Lost productivity, in dollar terms, due to coronary artery disease alone costs the nation billions of dollars a year. Advances in the diagnosis and treatment of heart disease in the past few decades have allowed more people to survive what were previously considered fatal cardiac events. As a result, the healthcare model has thus shifted in focus from one based mainly on acute intervention to one where significant emphasis is now placed on preventive treatments. Cardiovascular risk factors such as obesity, cholesterol levels and hypertension have been shown to be lowered and managed effectively with preventive treatment and interventions.

Outpatient Monitoring Increasing

The convergence of improved outpatient treatment processes and advancements in pharmaceutical care, in combination with the push to reduce hospital stays by third party payers, is creating a rise in the number of patients seeking outpatient medical care.

This, combined with a trend toward preventive care, has led to a rise in outpatient care centers, clinics, and physician visits. As one of the four vital signs, blood pressure is now being routinely measured on adults of all ages in almost any healthcare setting, which in turn is leading to greater usage of existing cuffs and the possibility of shorter replacement cycles.

Disposable Cuffs on the Rise

Although the market for replacement blood pressure cuffs is still heavily geared to reusable cuffs, the demand for disposable cuffs is on the rise as hospitals seek to minimize possible cross-infection by adopting disposable cuffs.

The growing prevalence in infectious diseases among patients being seen over the past decade or so, has created a momentum among hospitals and surgery centers to implement more stringent Infection Control Policies in order to reduce the possibility of contamination and infection from reusable medical supplies. Sterilization techniques have improved and many critical care areas of the hospital continue to use reusable cuffs. In addition, many cuff manufacturers have also introduced a line of cuffs with an antimicrobial coating to provide additional bacterial-fighting capabilities. However, for emergency departments, medical transport and trauma centers the cuff of choice has become the disposable, single-patient use cuff which can be disposed of at the end of patient treatment, often being sent with the patient upon admittance to be used to monitor the patient during his/her stay in the hospital.

There is also a trend toward disposable cuff use in other departments of the hospital, particularly in neonatal care. Delighted with the labor saving feature of using a disposable cuff, the cuff lasts the entire patient visit and can be transferred between departments and does not require cleaning between patients. The only difficulty has been finding a disposable cuff that is able to attach to a specific multiparameter patient monitor being used in the department. As a result of the demand from the healthcare providers, a greater number of multiparameter patient monitor equipment manufacturers have begun to offer disposable cuffs as an option. The growing availability of monitor specific disposable cuffs is contributing to the projected growth in disposable cuff sales over the coming decade.

Competition from Antimicrobial Reusable Cuffs

A number of leading cuff manufacturers have also begun to offer a line of reusable cuffs designed to provide additional assurances that the use of a reusable cuff will not lead to the potential transmission of infection to the next patient. Treated with an antimicrobial property, these cuffs are

finding usage particularly in high-risk settings such as burn and trauma centers and other areas in the hospital where the risk of infection can be life threatening.

In Summary

While all of these trends taken together indicate an increased demand for replacement blood pressure cuffs the ratio of reusable to disposable cuffs is shifting further to disposables as the sale of disposable blood pressure cuffs increase faster than the demand for reusable cuffs over the coming years.

[1] After-market blood pressure cuffs refer to replacement cuffs, which are purchased after the sale of the original cuff wears out.