

The Point of View

Linking to the ideas of sustainability some interesting specific hygiene product initiatives have recently been launched.

The Point of Views on this subject from Helena Engqvist, Engqvist Consulting, Gland /CH

Sustainability has become one of the hard-to-define buzzwords. Without going into specific details, a useful definition was created by the Brundtland Commission of the United Nations in 1987: "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

Fluffy baby diapers no more

Following the introduction in 2010 of Pampers Dry Max with more superabsorbent polymers and less fluff pulp (but curly fibers) by P&G, developments have continued along the same lines. The most recent product to hit the European market is Drylock Toujours, by Drylock Technologies. CEO Bart van Malderen: "This is the first fluffless, 3 mm super-thin baby diaper with a SAP based absorbent core, constructed in new patented technology similar to that of an ice-cube pouch." More surprisingly, the product has been introduced by the retail chain LIDL and expansion is ongoing across many European countries. The new diaper responds to the need for improved product performance, less materials, packaging and volume, as well as benefits in terms of transportation.

Education and feminine hygiene

Did you know that girls and women in some developing countries can miss up to 50 days of school and work a year because they do not have access to feminine hygiene prod-

ucts? In India, the government a few years ago approved a scheme to increase access to and use of high quality sanitary napkins to adolescent girls in rural areas so they can attend school and not stay at home while having their period. The roll-out of this program is now under-way and will provide sanitary napkins at a very low price and also increase the awareness on menstrual hygiene among adolescent girls, access to products and ensure safe disposal of the used products. In Rwanda, the situation is similar. Girls and women may have to use rags and other materials while lacking appropriate sanitary protection products. Sustainable Health Enterprises or SHE, www.sheinnovates.com, aims at establishing micro industries to provide affordable sanitary protection products made from locally available materials. Currently an operation has been started making sanitary pads using banana tree fibers as the absorbent core in the products. The production not only gives girls and women sanitary pads, but also creates jobs and dignity.

A cellulose renaissance

Who would have believed that cellulose fibers could make a renaissance in the top-sheets of hygiene products? However, innovative top-sheets based on 100% botanical Tencel fibers have been introduced in sanitary pads and panty-liners and produced by Yejimiin in South Korea. These products provide a smooth and silky-soft surface and are especially designed for

women with sensitive skin. Products containing Tencel continues to be an interesting option for materials based on renewable fibers.

Incontinence – a matter of taboo and training

Breaking the taboos is a matter for people suffering from incontinence around the globe. In the UK, an All Party Parliamentary Group for Continence Care, chaired by Baroness Sally Green OBE, has prepared a guide for the National Health Services, NHS, in England, about incontinence that illustrates the importance of continence care and sets out how to commission and deliver a quality integrated service which meets patient's needs and is cost-effective to the NHS. While the NHS some years ago established a procurement organization in cooperation with DHL in order to save £1 bn on harmonizing logistics and procurement of medical supplies and services, this contract now also includes incontinence services and products. In practice it allows for the provision of the right type and number of products delivered to each person, a system that already has been in place in many other European countries for years. In China, like many years ago in Sweden, training programs to increase knowledge and understanding of incontinence have been launched by SCA for nurses. When implemented, more than 200,000 nurses are expected to have increased their knowledge and understanding of incontinence. The matter of sustainability impacts the personal daily life of every human being. Therefore issues like education, information and access to good products remain important to address. The examples above show the importance of continued efforts on both a large as well as small scale to make changes for a better daily living.