

MAY 2001 NEWS

FAULTY DISINFECTANT

Recently it has been reported that in Belgium and Holland a faulty batch of medical disinfectant may have put thousands of patients at risk of infection from potentially fatal viruses. Thousands of people have been called for tests after they were treated with surgical instruments which could have been disinfected with the chemical Cidex. It emerged that a batch of the Johnson & Johnson product exported to hospitals in Belgium and Holland was missing a vital ingredient following a mistake at the Yorkshire factory where it was made. Cidex is a chemical used in hospitals to help kill viruses on surgical instruments that are too fragile to be heat-treated. The company is working with Belgian and Dutch health authorities, government agencies and the hospitals involved to carry out tens of thousands of tests on people who were potentially at risk. Johnson & Johnson have been reported to have said the risk of patients contracting an infection because of the faulty Cidex is very remote.

NEW ALZHIEMERS DRUG AVAILABLE ON NHS

The decision to make the expensive drugs for Alzheimers available on the NHS was welcomed by patients suffering from Alzheimers and their carers. Alzheimer is the most common form of senile dementia. This degenerative brain disease affects up to 400,000 people in the UK. This new decision means that up to 250,000 patients will be able to try three drugs known to halt the progress of the disease for a year or more, and in some cases reverse symptoms for a period. Although this decision could cost the NHS up to approximately, 40 million a year in prescriptions, a health economist said, 100 million could be saved in annual nursing home costs. The drugs work by blocking an enzyme in the brain that destroys acetylcholine, which is a chemical involved in memory. The drugs will cost, 1000 a year per patient and although the decision is not legally binding, health authorities will have to explain why they are not making the drugs available.

COULD CATS CAUSE SCHIZOPHRENIA?

It has been reported that schizophrenia could be caused by a virus found in cats' faeces. Two American scientists Fuller Torrey, a psychiatrist and Robert Yolken, a virologist have suggested that there could be a link between schizophrenia and a virus transmitted from cats. Schizophrenia is a deeply distressing psychotic illness that causes hallucinations, delusions and a decline in an ability to think clearly. It usually affects people under the age of 30 or in their late teens. The Freudian notion that the condition is the result of poor upbringing, with mainly the mother to be blamed, is no longer taken seriously. Fuller Torrey has for some years been suggesting that the parasite toxoplasma found in cats' faeces could be the cause. Initially his suggestions were not taken seriously. But now there seems to be some supporters and some studies have come up with results in his favour. He is planning to try the anti-viral drug on a number of schizophrenics, and also plans to treat others with antibiotics. If there are to be clear improvement signs, then we would have to think again about our beloved pet cats.

OBSOLESCENCE

BS-7000-5, Guide to Managing Obsolescence is being developed by BSI. Obsolescence of tools, processes, support products, software and specifications is inevitable and ignoring it can be expensive. The new British Standard gives guidance on developing a cost effective obsolescence management process that is part of the design, development, production and support processes.

The standard is based on Ministry of Defence Standard Def Stan 00-71 and has now reached the draft stage and is ready for public comment. A copy can be obtained from BSI

Customer Services, reference BS7000-5 and Draft for Public Comment 01/402159DC.

E-SIGNATURE

As more companies conduct business over the Internet it has become necessary to find a secure way of conducting transactions on the Web. The Electronic Communication Act passed in 2000 has gone some way to solve this dilemma. The use of an e-signature or a digital signature has now become the method of verification of authenticity of the sender. The signature is a digital code that can be attached to an electronically transmitted message that uniquely identifies the sender, i.e. proof of the integrity, origin and intent of the sender. Like a written signature, the purpose of the e-signature is to guarantee that the individual sending the message really is who he or she claims to be. Digital signatures are especially important for electronic commerce. The signature is issued by a trusted third party such as Trustwise (an off-shoot of BT). They carry out a few checks on the company including company registration and domain ownership. If they're credible, they are issued a certificate.

The Digital Signature Scheme ISO 9796 standard contains information on the standard from the Guide to Open Systems Specifications.

The increased use of an e-signature looks likely to replace the traditional paper-based one currently underpinning all commerce. There are many advantages; one significant advantage is the proof of documents not being tampered with in transit. Although the system should decrease the amount of paperwork needed to complete deals, and increase the speed of online transactions by eliminating the need to duplicate documents in both electronic and paper format, there will be many who won't jump the psychological hurdle of giving up the pen and paper. However, there are considerable benefits for small businesses trading online. As larger companies increasingly do business over the Internet, smaller companies that can offer secure online trading facilities are bound to be in a position of strength.

CODES OF PRACTICE FOR MASONRY

Several revised versions of masonry standards are soon to be released by BSI.

BS5628 Part 1: Structural reinforced masonry.

BS5628 part 3: Code of Practice for the Use of Masonry Materials and components, design and workmanship. This covers the design, specification and construction of brick, concrete and natural stone masonry.

(BS5628 Part 2 was published last year)

BS8000 part 3: Workmanship on building sites. Codes of Practice for masonry.

BSI PRESSURE EQUIPMENT INSPECTION

The BSI Pressure Equipment Group is now accredited to EN45004 as an Inspection Body for all types of pressure equipment.

It is now able to offer a wide range of services to industry including:

- Independent third party design appraisal/review
- On-site and shop inspection of pressure equipment manufacture and testing
- On-site and shop qualification of welders and welding procedures
- Review of manufacturing/material and NDE specifications/procedures
- Certification of pressure equipment to the PED 97/23/EC and/or Pressure Equipment Regulations No S11999:2001 to permit CE marking of all modules
- Quality Assurance Certification Modules, D, DI, E, EI, H & HI

- Direct Inspection Modules F and G
- Technical File Reviews: Module B and BI
- Production Monitoring Module AI and CI
- Qualification of permanent joining (e.g. welding) personnel and procedures

Further information can be found from BSI

CEN PRESIDENT

The European Committee for the Standardisation (CEN) has recently appointed a new president, Professor Christian Beckervordersandforth. He is head of the development and scientific service division of Germany's leading gas company, Rhurgas and holds various teaching assignments and is concerned with a number of influential committees of gas and water associations in Germany.

New Member for CEN

CEN has welcomed as a new Associate member –CECIMO – the European Committee for Co-operation of the Machine Tool Industries. It has a membership of 1,450 companies in 15 European countries.

RADIO AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS TERMINAL EQUIPMENT

All radio and telecommunications terminal equipment on the European market has had to comply with the R&TTE Directive since 8th April 2001. National approvals for radio transmission equipment and approvals issued under the earlier TTE Directive are no longer valid. Enforcement in the UK will be via Trading Standards officers who are responsible for telecom equipment and the Radiocommunications Agency that is responsible for radio equipment.

To help manufacturers and importers, BSI can provide an R&TTE Guide on CD-ROM. For more information and advice from BSI, contact them on 020 8996 7474.

NOTIFIED BODY – UK MEDICAL DEVICES AGENCY

Lloyd's Register Quality Assurance Ltd (LRQA) has been appointed as a notified body, by the UK Medical Devices Agency, under the In-vitro Diagnostic Medical Devices directive 98/79/EC. Conformity assessment services can now be provided by LRQA for the majority of products in Annex II of the directive.

Services will include:

Annex III – Design Examination for Self Test Devices for urinalysis, endocrinology, general chemistry, general immunology and haematology

Annex IV and VII – Full Quality Assurance and Production Quality Assurance for Self Test and medium to high-risk devices, such as tests for rubella and toxoplasmosis; and HIV and blood grouping.

For further information, contact LRQA on 01247 688 2373

BS7799 AWARD FOR VODAFONE HIGH TECH DATA CENTRE

The information security standard BS7799 has been won by Vodafone's data centre in Germany. The IT and billing centre, near Dusseldorf handles the transactions for both mobile and fixed phone accounts for about 20 million phone users across Germany.

COMPLAINTS MANAGEMENT

CMSAS 86:2000 – the Complaints Management System Assessment Specification has been awarded to Camden Council. The Council actively encourages customers to complain so that by learning from its mistakes it can improve its service. It successfully handles 2000 complaints annually and has a dedicated team of complaint’s managers. This award, the first for a local authority in the UK, is a third party endorsement of the excellence of its procedures.