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Antimicrobial Copper Touch Surfaces Reduce Infection Risk

Architects and designers for healthcare builds are increasingly looking to incorporate antimicrobial copper touch surfaces in the healthcare environment as the latest science shows this can reduce ICU patients' risk of acquiring a healthcare-associated infection by greater than 40%¹.

In a trial funded by the US Department of Defense, ICU rooms were fitted with six key touch surfaces made from copper or copper alloy, and microbial contamination and infections were compared with control rooms over a period of 200 weeks. Initial results show copper surfaces demonstrated a 97% reduction in surface pathogens – a figure supporting results from other clinical trials in the UK and Chile – and patients in the 'copper rooms' had a greater than 40% lower risk of acquiring an infection.

With the latest trial linking the established contamination reduction with data on infection risk reduction, manufacturers of antimicrobial copper products such as grab rails, light switches, door handles and taps are seeing increased interest from the healthcare sector and other environments where hygiene is a concern. The range of available products is growing and the latest results should spur industry on to offer Antimicrobial Copper over-bed tables, bed rails and other medical equipment and furniture.

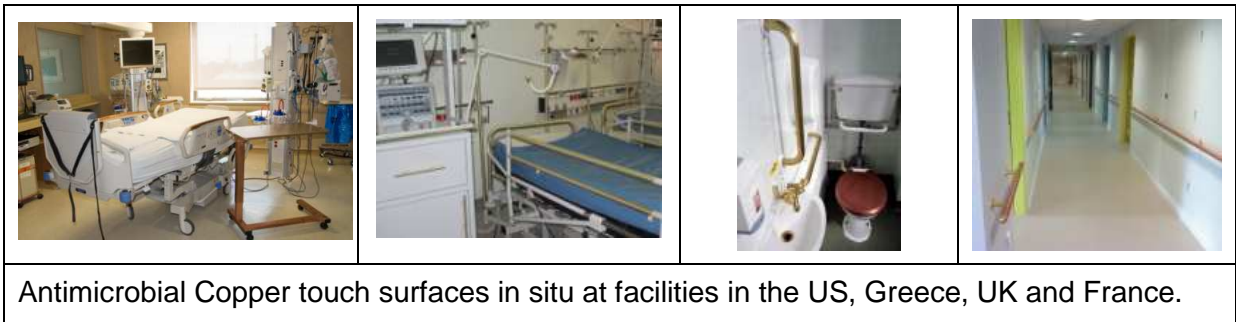
The latest UK installation is a £1 million, eight-bed intensive care unit specially designed with cutting-edge infection prevention measures, which has just opened in Manchester. Door furniture in all clinical areas and work surfaces used for the preparation of medication have been made from copper.

Antimicrobial Copper is shorthand for a range of alloys (among them brasses, bronzes and copper-nickels) with proven rapid, broad spectrum antimicrobial efficacy under typical indoor conditions. Cost-effective, hard-wearing and offering a long service life, Antimicrobial Copper products will reduce contamination on their surfaces 24/7, in between cleans. There is no coating to wear away, and the antimicrobial efficacy will not be impaired by scratches or dents.

To help specifiers identify efficacious products, the copper industry operates a stewardship scheme, the Antimicrobial Copper brand and Cu+ mark, to denote products made from

approved antimicrobial copper alloys by companies complying with strict usage rules. These rules guide that organisation's understanding of the underlying technology and the way they promote, advise and deploy it in line with existing research, regulatory and legislative requirements.

For more information about copper's antimicrobial properties, the online product directory and installations from around the world, visit www.antimicrobialcopper.org.



ⁱ *Copper Touch Surface Initiative Microbiology and Immunology, Schmidt MG, Medical University of South Carolina, Charleston, USA, BMC Proceedings 2011, 5 (Suppl 6):O53 (Oral presentation delivered at 1st International Conference on Prevention and Infection Control, June 29-July 2, 2011, Geneva, Switzerland)*

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