

Multiple use, minimal fuss

Clive Bryant, global product and marketing director at **Softbox Systems**, looks at how rental programmes for reusable and sustainable temperature-controlled packaging systems are ticking all the boxes for hospitals and clinical investigators.

As the temperature-controlled packaging (TCP) industry ushers in an era of commitment to sustainability, hospitals and clinical investigators stand to be the beneficiaries. The healthcare sector, with its considerable carbon footprint, has been the predominant influencer in this culture change, as its institutions look to collaborate with associate industries and establish environmentally sustainable operations.

Their rallying cry is being answered. Packaging industry pioneers are ploughing funds into research and development, bringing a range of new products – and significantly, services – to the table.

With the latest high-performance TCP systems offering recycling and, more recently, reuse capabilities, their increasing popularity may come as no surprise. They are, however, gaining traction on other, equally favourable grounds.

Enhance environmental credentials

First and foremost, any temperature-controlled packaging solution worth its salt needs to flawlessly do the basics. The new advanced systems comprise breakthrough materials that offer the kind of increased

thermal shipping protection that clinical trial drugs now demand. There's no room for product integrity to be compromised.

They are also palpably more robust, affording multiple use, which enables environmental and regulatory benchmarks to be met. Site waste reduction is a self-evident concomitant. But when paired with a proactive distribution service, these reusable packaging systems also offer respite for the hospitals and clinical investigators themselves.

Take disposal off the table

Forward-thinking TCP companies now dispense their packaging systems to healthcare clients but collect them from the end user, eliminating the time and hassle previously required to organise the local disposal of used packaging. This welcome slice of logic gives clinical investigators more time to focus on core competencies like administering drugs to patients, as the packaging companies manage distribution.

While these services aren't exactly mainstream, they are out there. Softbox Systems, for example, so often acknowledged for its pioneering work in the cold-chain solutions arena, has its simple

and easy-to-use AEON Exchange rental programme. Having a low-cost service available for high-performance shipping negates the challenges in disposal, including any regulatory complications that require imported packaging to be re-exported.

Environmentally green, financially black

Being composed of vacuum-insulation panels and phase-change materials – which, in combination, securely maintain temperature stability – reusable packaging systems offer healthcare providers a greener alternative. Not surprisingly, they come at an increased cost, albeit a marginal one, but only at face value.

In actual fact, higher prices often necessitate full reuse programmes, and this is where the dynamics shift. When these products are linked to a distribution service, sustainable cost-effectiveness can be achieved with reuse capabilities lowering outbound shipping costs. This makes good reading for healthcare organisations, many of which are being challenged to reduce their overall transportation costs.

Push sustainability boundaries

This generation of multi-use shipping systems that are replacing single-use water-based systems has made huge strides in sustainability, affordability and hassle-free management. But it may only be the beginning.

As technological advancements generate superior materials, the dawn of packaging solutions that push sustainability limits even further could be on the horizon. It is not inconceivable that we might soon see shipping systems with new components that enable even-greater levels of reuse – without any degradation in thermal performance. ●

For further information

www.softboxsystems.com



The latest high-performance TCP systems offer not only recycling but also reusability.