

Isku – Breaking the Chain of Infection with Antibacterial Furniture



Vesa Vihavainen, MBA, M.Sc.Econ

*****@**isk.fi

Senior Executive, International Operations, Health, Technology, Business Development, Sales, Leadership - Isku Interior Ltd., InfoVision Inc., Strategystar Inc.

Finnish company Isku has launched a range of antibacterial furniture that brings active hygiene to the healthcare environment. Isku's range was on show at Arab Health in Dubai last month, where *HealthManagement* spoke to Vesa Vihavainen, Senior Executive Vice President of ISKU Health.

Tell us about Isku and active hygiene

Isku is a family-owned furniture manufacturer, founded in 1928. We are accredited by the Copper Development Association to use the antimicrobial CU+ mark. There are certain qualities of metal, which are approved for healthcare use. There are 500 approved copper alloys, and we use two of them.

They might be based on metal or silver-copper - both kill bacteria. For example, the fabric on ISKU chairs is antibacterial material, which is treated with silver molecules. The paint and lacquer on the wooden parts include silver content. Armrests can be brass or copper with antimicrobial properties. We say "active hygiene", because when you touch the copper, the process begins immediately. Copper kills the bacteria and how it grows. Ions come from the metal to the bacteria's DNA and kill the DNA before it can move by itself. That is why the hospital infection cannot spread out anymore when this type of product is used.

We introduced this antibacterial product line in June 2014. We are already active in Scandinavia and Russia and are looking to expand internationally with partners. We have a reference occupational health clinic in Finland using this line.

We are the first company to introduce it in a line of products, and we are continually increasing the number of products.

What are the major challenges for the company?

The major challenge is to make people understand that they can break the chain of infection by utilising antimicrobial properties in our antibacterial products.

In terms of cost is there a premium for this furniture?

There are different ways to look at this. What is price and what is cost? If society wants to reduce overall costs, they should implement this and save lots of lives and additional healthcare costs. When you make the investment, then there is on average a 20-30% higher price. However, the

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payback time can be very short. According to studies by the National Health Service in England, only 3-4 months.

How does the furniture need to be cleaned?

There are different kinds of possibilities. You clean the fabrics, lacquer and paint as usual. For metal, you clean it normally, but the cleaning products should not have an alcohol content of over 70% and they should be citrus-based. If you use normal cleaning products on this metal, it will be clean and it will be also antibacterial. Even if you don't clean it, it will be antibacterial.

As *HealthManagement* is focused on healthcare management, we like to ask our interviewees for their thoughts on management. Do you have a top management tip?

Networking is very important. Younger people should try to get into contact with experienced people. That's very simple, but true. The more people you know in the right position, then you have access to certain things.

Could you single out a career highlight?

There are several. I ran an electronics manufacturer in the USA, which was one of the 500 fastest growing in the U.S. I have introduced product lines in Europe several times. I was in Eastern Europe when the Iron Curtain fell and the countries were growing, like the Middle East is now. It's the same type of feeling and excitement that I have now with Isku.

If you hadn't chosen this career, what would you have been?

Probably a priest!

What hobbies do you have outside work?

I write songs.

Do you have a favourite quotation or motto?

I would say that there is always a way.

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