

The Human Touch

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Throughout my travels visiting pharmaceutical companies around the country, one issue always crops up — how to stop contamination.

Many companies that process sterile products have implemented numerous strategies to prevent contamination from entering processing areas: special gowning suites and gowning procedures; high-tech air-handling systems that pressurize processing areas so when a door is opened, clean air rushes out — preventing “bad” air from rushing in; and, of course, the latest containment and isolator technologies all help to keep the “bad” stuff out.

But perhaps the best defense is a good offense when it comes to contamination control — restricting access to sensitive areas to a limited number of people.

But what happens when this strategy is impossible? For example, hospitals have a real problem with contamination control, and stories of Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA) outbreaks always make headlines. Hospitals have implemented a passive system to try and stem contamination — installing disinfectant soap stations everywhere — but maybe something more active" is needed?

Pharmaceutical facilities could look to the cruise ship industry for an answer. Cruise ships have the same contamination control problem — recent norovirus outbreaks on several ships made headlines — but cruise ship operators have taken a different approach to contamination control.

In addition to the ubiquitous hand sanitizers placed everywhere, cruise ships station an actual person outside every eating area extolling the virtues of, and cajoling people to use, the sanitizing stations before eating.

In fact, on a recent cruise I was lucky enough to go on, one of the crew stationed outside of the main buffet became a celebrity in his own right — even going (somewhat) [viral through a YouTube video](#) [1].

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Could this approach work in a hospital? Why not? In pharmaceutical facilities? Maybe ... but you would need to gown up first.

What's your take? Please feel free to email mike.auerbach@advantagemedia.com [2] or comment below!

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[1] http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mr9Aey-U2_4

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