ST. PAUL, Minn. (Jan. 8, 2013) — Tackling a prevalent but unrecognized complication that impacts patient safety in a wide variety of care settings, more than 20 experts from around the country have teamed to study the role and impact of medical adhesives as their use relates to skin integrity, infection control and cost management. The interdisciplinary group met last month at the Consensus Summit on Medical Adhesives & Patient Safety, sponsored by 3M Skin & Wound Care Division in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Skin injury is a serious problem across units in the health care setting, affecting at least 1.5 million patients annually in the U.S. alone and estimated to cost facilities $20 to $50 per incident. An aging baby boomer population is one of several trends expected to drive an increase in both the number of patients with fragile skin and the overall incidence of skin injury.

During the two-day Summit, clinicians worked to:

- Assess skin damage caused by medical adhesives;
- Document the spectrum of care settings and medical applications where such skin damage occurs;
- Identify knowledge gaps regarding medical adhesives and skin safety;
- Define best practices for prevention of skin damage caused by medical adhesives;
- Discuss infection control practices related to medical adhesives and cost associated with medical adhesive-related injuries; and
- Identify research priorities for development of new adhesive technologies and protocols for skin protection.

A technical paper is expected this spring.

Specialties represented included critical care; dermatology; electrophysiology; geriatrics; infection control; infusion therapy; neonatology; oncology; orthopedics; pediatrics; perioperative; physical therapy; plastics; research; and wound, ostomy and continence.

The event was moderated by Mikel Gray, PhD, editor-in-chief of the Journal of Wound, Ostomy and Continence Nursing; professor and nurse practitioner at University of Virginia-Charlottesville; and past president of both the Society of Urologic Nurses and Associates (SUNA) and Certification Board for Urologic Nurses and Associates (CBUNA).

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“Medical tape touches almost every patient every day, and yet it is clear a gap exists in recommendations around best practices and protocols in its use today,” said Dr. Gray. “This Summit provided a unique opportunity to bring together diverse professionals with a common interest to explore a number of aspects of medical adhesives usage to improve patient safety outcomes. We look forward to releasing our recommendations.”

The Summit was made possible by an educational grant from 3M Skin & Wound Care in keeping with its commitment to enhance patient care through collaboration and innovation.

“We always welcome the opportunity to collaborate with our industry partners, and look for opportunities to bring together clinicians in important and meaningful ways,” said Paul Keel, president of 3M Skin & Wound Care. “Medical adhesives are a foundational but sometimes overlooked element of patient care. As the industry leader in medical adhesives we recognized the need for further study and cooperation that we believed this event would address.”

3M’s unmatched leadership in adhesives – it introduced the world’s first tape, masking tape, in 1925 – eventually led to the debut of the first hypoallergenic surgical tape in 1960. Today the company offers a full line of proprietary medical tapes. Product overviews and additional information is available through the Medical Tapes section of the 3M Health Care website.

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