

Pouch Discretion and Concealment. Importance for the ostomate and products to meet their needs

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Introduction:

Often ostomates describe a loss of identity, dignity, privacy and independence following ostomy surgery. This is most likely due to a compromised confidence in themselves. When living with a stoma, there are two main factors at stake; convenience and dignity. Convenience should be understood as something which provides ease and comfort to habits and practice. Dignity on the other hand is more complicated. People with stomas lose the ability to control their bowels; a pouching system is a continual reminder of this, which is often equated as a loss of dignity and the fear of being stigmatized by people and society.

Appliance discretion is more than product concealment; it is also the ability to unobtrusively function during daily activities. The new generation ostomy products are intended to improve upon discretion and comfort. Pouch visibility is a key component of discretion as ostomates may be concerned that the ostomy pouch is apparent to others. A recent study (1) indicates that as many as 54 percent of ostomates occasionally or always worry about the pouch being noticeable to others.

Methods

A multi site, un-blinded, historically controlled observational study of a new 1 piece product was performed (2). Seventy-five subjects who were currently using a 1 piece product, were enrolled in order to detect a 15% difference in product performance between test device and historical control (alpha=0.05, beta=0.20).

The study received a waiver of review by the NHS REC and was conducted in accordance with basic ethical principles including informed consent and respect for the confidentiality of participants. Each participant satisfied the inclusion and exclusion criteria and provided signed informed consent prior to enrolment. Individual participation was for one week or upon using 15 closed pouches which ever came first. Participants were asked to complete a usage diary for each pouch worn.

Results and Discussion:

Ostomy surgery is a life altering surgery. While the benefits to the health of the person that has undergone the surgery are self-evident; it saves lives and frees people from debilitating diseases, the physical presence of the effect of the surgery, that is, the stoma and its maintenance can be a difficult obstacle to overcome. When faced with the reality of a stoma, ostomates have a long and difficult journey ahead to overcome the stigma of non-control so rigidly enforced in early life. It is not uncommon for someone that has undergone ostomy surgery to be self-conscious of the fact that they are an ostomate; to have lost control of their bodily functions, and to worry that this will be revealed to others if it is noticed that they are wearing a pouch. To this end, and necessitated by the need for discretion it is common for ostomates to change

clothing styles to accommodate the pouching system; pouches protrude from the abdomen when they fill with effluent, and balloon due to flatus.

A newly designed pouch with lower headspace, an off centered starter hole and an improved filter was assessed. Product intention with the new design is to improve discretion and comfort, as well as enable the ostomate greater freedom to choose clothes and activities that reflect their lifestyle.

Integral to the pouch design and the issue of discretion is the performance of the improved filter. The airflow rate through the filter is more than doubled with this new filter compared to the previous generation of filter technology.

The superiority of the filter, combined with the low head space and the new design, may have contributed to the response that in 71 % of pouch wearings, under a variety of conditions, study subjects were satisfied that the pouch design met its intended purpose; to be less noticeable under clothing, and that in 72 % of all wearings study subjects agreed that it was less noticeable than their current pouch. This is shown in [Graphs 1 and 2](#).

Discretion

Additionally, 72 percent of study subjects were satisfied that the pouch design met its intended purpose; to be less noticeable under clothing, and 76 percent agreed that it was less noticeable than their current pouch.

Discretion is also the ability to unobtrusively function during daily activities. When the respondents in the study were queried as to environments that they felt comfortable wearing the new pouch in (Under which situations did the new pouch help you feel more comfortable), 35 of 75 (46.7%) responded "at work", 34 of 75 (45.7%) responded "at a friends home", 35 of 75 (46.7%)³ responded "at other public events", and 15 of 75 responded "during intimate moments".

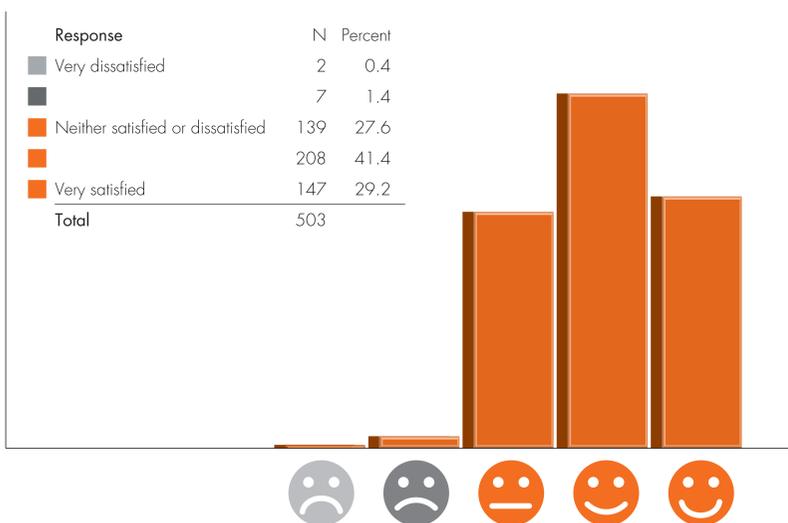
Conclusion:

Having a stoma can affect everyday activities that most people take for granted. Adjusting to a stoma involves concealment of the appliance and consideration of what is involved during changing and disposal of the appliance.

The study finds that the new pouches were well accepted by the majority of subjects. With the additional benefit of improved discretion the newly designed pouches may positively impact self-confidence and quality of life of those with ostomies.

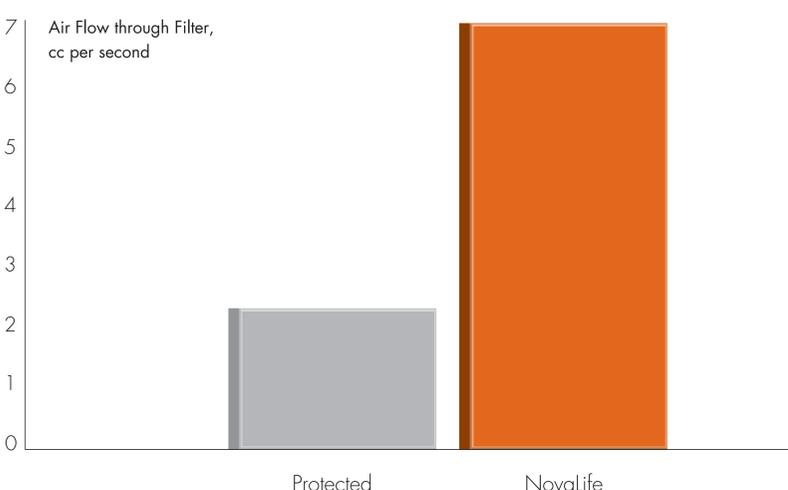
Graph 1

This pouch was designed to be less noticeable under your clothing. How satisfied are you that this pouch does this?



Graph 2

Compared to the pouch you normally use, this pouch was less noticeable under your clothing.



Footnotes

- Hollister Ostomy Comprehensive Health and Life Assessment, Hollister Incorporated, Libertyville, Illinois, USA
- The tested pouch is the Dansac NovoLife 1 Closed
- Respondents were asked to select all that apply, therefore multiple responses are possible. Thus, the newly designed pouch has also demonstrated to provide discretion during varied daily activities.

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