Tom Dugan, President of Smith & Nephew’s North American Advanced Wound Management Division

Chimere G. Holmes

In September 2008, Tom Dugan became the President for Smith & Nephew’s North American Advanced Wound Management Division (St. Petersburg, Fla.). Tom joined the company and wound care market with an impressive 28 years of medical device experience. He began his career working for Johnson & Johnson’s Critikon division. Following several sales, marketing, and corporate management positions, Tom became Senior VP for SonoSite (Bothell, Wa), the worldwide leader in hand-carried ultrasound. Wearing multiple entrepreneurial hats, Tom was responsible for the company’s US business. At the time, SonoSite was competing against larger corporations such as General Electric, Phillips, and Siemens, yet controlled more than a 60% market share.

Tom was delighted with the opportunity to work for Smith & Nephew. “Over the years I’ve had a lot of different opportunities, working for different types of businesses,” he says. “I’ve worked for smart, interesting people and I’ve tried to take away something from each one of those individuals. This has helped me tremendously in coming into this role [with Smith & Nephew] because this is a very different business,” Tom explained.

Smith & Nephew’s wound management division’s overall mission includes a broad portfolio of products for all stages of wound treatment. “We are very clinician-focused — that is, focused on education, support, and proper utilization of products. Smith & Nephew has a long heritage in this area. The wound management business is what Smith & Nephew was founded on 152 years ago. We’ve been responsible for a great deal of innovation and a significant amount of new technology in the market and we continue to build on that.”

Tom finds that some of the most fulfilling aspects of working with his division include the company’s launch into the negative pressure wound therapy (NPWT) arena, with the recent introduction to the US market of foam dressing products, and the new RENASYS™ line of pumps. Tom enjoyed getting the organization focused on taking full advantage of all opportunities, spending a significant amount of time with customers in order to fully identify their individual needs.

“The key is being close to your customer and understanding what their true clinical needs are and ensuring that we have the right product and solution to help them with that,” he says. “Whether it’s infection management with a silver-coated dressing or negative pressure where we’ve got different dressing interfaces for clinicians for the first time. Given our broad portfolio of advanced wound care products, Smith & Nephew is somewhat unique in terms of our ability to provide for the needs of all the different points on the wound care spectrum. And we’re seeing a lot of interest not only from the wound care nursing and critical care community, but also from hospital administrators who are seeing benefits of working with Smith & Nephew in related areas. For example, when a patient goes through an extended, very complicated trauma or reconstructive procedure where you might be using external fixation, the big worry is postsurgical site infections. We offer a number of products that can address this. We have dressings like ACTICOAT™ that when used post operatively can proactively address the potential for surgical site infections. VERSAJET™ hydrosurgery products for debridement, and our new line of NPWT products. In addition, there are many synergies with larger parts of Smith & Nephew—the orthopedic and endoscopy divisions—and we see a lot of interest coming to us through them and through their customers.”
Seeing that the healthcare arena continues to undergo such harsh and dramatic changes in this tough economic climate, Smith & Nephew is prepared for what lies ahead by simply believing in their brand. Tom explained, “We are in pretty challenging economic times, in the overall economy and in healthcare in particular. I think this situation is going to get a lot more focused and become a lot more acute. What we’re really looking to do at Smith & Nephew is first concentrate on NPWT as the big opportunity. I think the fact that we now are able to give clinicians the opportunity to really exercise their judgment about what types of dressings are appropriate for the clinical indications they are faced with is crucial. They can ask, ‘Do I use foam or gauze? What’s right for the patient? What’s right for that particular wound?’ I think it’s important that Smith & Nephew offers not only NPWT, but also the broad range of basic and advanced dressings. Smith & Nephew is able to sit down with clinicians and discuss the best products to use at any given time. For instance, you may use negative pressure on a patient for a period of time, but then it may make sense to transition them from negative pressure to another dressing that might be less expensive and more efficient clinically at that stage of the wound healing process. This is not only the appropriate thing to do from a clinical perspective, but also an economic perspective. It will help the healthcare system reduce cost.”

Smith & Nephew recently introduced its new, FDA-cleared RENASYS EZ™ Negative Pressure Wound Therapy system that is specifically designed to address the needs of wound care professionals and patients. RENASYS EZ™ enables clinicians to treat surgical, traumatic, or chronic wounds according to the individual needs of the patient and the characteristics of the particular wound. The system can be used with both foam and gauze wound interfaces in the US and weighs only 7.4 lbs. Features and functions include a battery that runs for up to 40 hours and charges in 3 hours and IV pole and bed mounts that reduce the system’s footprint at the bedside.

In addition, the company announced the US launch of its FDA-cleared RENASYS™ GO. This new mobile device is designed to address the needs of clinicians and active, mobile patients. The RENASYS™ GO is lightweight (< 3 lb). It is available with a discrete carrying case to enhance mobility and a frosted 300-cc canister that minimizes the visibility of exudate. Multiple alarms and the patient lockout feature enhance patient safety. An extended 20-hour battery life and less than 4-hour charge time extend mobility. The user-friendly digital settings reduce the risk of error. Tom Dugan, President of Smith & Nephew’s North American Advanced Wound Management Division, says, “It really improves the patient’s ability to be up and mobile—obviously a big component of recovery. Smith & Nephew will offer a whole new line of products [in the future] and we will continue to bring out new things over the course of not only the rest of this year but also the coming year—we have a huge commitment to this piece of business.”
Tom has noticed an increased awareness of cost among hospital administrators and materials management professionals, as well as specific caregivers who have become much more cognizant of the economic implications of their decisions. Tom’s division is getting a lot more questions; in response, they are expanding the way they respond to certain concerns and issues. This also inspires healthcare professionals to start thinking of new ways to provide a high level of more cost effective patient care. “It’s not always about a lower price,” Tom says. “It’s about better utilization of certain types of products and better education. We can help clinicians and other healthcare professionals with these concerns.”

Overall, Tom believes it is critical to keep the patient’s interest first. “First and foremost, you always have to do what’s right for the patient,” he says. “Economics play a large part but we’d all like to think that we’re able to help do what’s right regardless of dollars.”

In terms of moving forward, Smith & Nephew has great business endeavors on the horizon. “We’ve got a huge commitment to the NPWT business so we are going to develop new products and innovate,” Tom says. “We don’t want to rest on just these [current] products. Some of that innovation is evolving — combinations of technologies like dressings with negative pressure pumps and working with clinicians regarding proper utilization of the product. We do that through our own clinical resource specialists and medical education managers in the field supporting the sales force, plenty of web based education, and other clinical aids. We also work with two partners, Universal Hospital Services (UHS) and Apria Healthcare. With UHS and Apria we have the largest NPWT distribution channel in the US and can deliver and support NPWT systems wherever clinicians and patients may need them,” Tom said.

“The focus on what you’re doing for the clinicians and the patients that they serve is number one. This helps in making business decisions versus businesses that operate solely on the bottom line.”

When asked what is the best part about being a President at Smith & Nephew, Tom answered, “I do this because I really like the medical device business. This is a special business, as opposed to working on Wall Street or selling other products. Although those are all worthwhile professions, I think this is something special. I get a lot of personal satisfaction knowing the things we do make a difference in people’s lives. I get a great deal of satisfaction knowing I’m involved in improving people’s quality of life.”

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