Fact Sheet

The Contamination Risks associated with reusable irrigation tubing
Reusable tubing can lead to confusion. The inherent nature of this tube can be difficult to reprocess with 100% assurance that it is effectively cleaned. The following examples show potential risks associated with using reusable irrigation tubing.

Improper set-up and Reprocessing of Flexible Endoscope Tubing and Accessories
December 22, 2008
The Veterans Health Administration issued a “Patient Safety Alert” around the improper usage of the reusable Olympus flushing tube and auxiliary water tube. This resulted in the backflow of body fluids into the irrigation source tubing.¹

Olympus Important Safety Notice
January 26, 2009
Following the event at the Veterans Health Administration, Olympus issued an important safety notice clarifying the need to follow the instructions for use of their reusable irrigation tubing. This notice called out the important difference between their flushing tube and their auxiliary water tube.²

ASGE Statement on Miami VA Healthcare System
March 26, 2009
The American Society of Gastroenterology released a statement regarding the Miami VA Healthcare System, identifying that the reusable irrigation tubing was simply being rinsed during reprocessing, not disinfected in accordance with the manufacturer’s instructions.³

As demonstrated above, reusable irrigation tubing can create additional opportunities for confusion and misuse in the GI unit.

Industry Statements

American Society of Gastrointestinal Endoscopy (ASGE)
Episodes of transmission of infection to patients can be traced, in most cases, to procedural errors in cleaning and disinfection of the endoscope or its accessories. Bacteria or viruses have been transmitted by:...(2) contaminated water bottles and irrigating solutions...⁴

Association of Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC)
...The water bottle and connecting tubes are difficult to clean and disinfect and are often colonized with pseudomonas species and may serve as important reservoirs of cross-infection.⁵

Society of Gastrointestinal Nursing & Associates (SGNA)
...Prior to storage, there should be no residual fluid or moisture remaining...Thoroughly dry all water bottle surfaces to reduce the potential for bacterial colonization. ⁶

⁵ Association of Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC), www.apic.org
⁶ Society of Gastroenterology Nurses and Associates (SGNA), www.sgna.org
⁷ American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy. Infection control during gastrointestinal endoscopy. Volume 49, No. 6, 1999
Contamination risks in the GI unit

Infection control is a top concern in GI units today. The American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy (ASGE) states that cross-contamination and infection may occur by contaminated equipment.\(^7\)

- **Mycobacteria** (*mycobacterium tuberculosis, mycobacterium terrae*)
- **Small or non-lipid viruses** (*poliovirus, coxsackie viruses*)
- **Fungal spores** (*aspergillus, candida*)
- **Bacterial salmonella**
- **Bacterial pseudomonas** (*staphylococcus aureus*)
- **Bacterial spores** (*clostridium difficile*)
- **Viral** (*hepatitis B (HBV)*)
- **Viral** (*hepatitis C (HCV)*)