

Column for Soap, Perfumery and Cosmetics
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INNOVATION FROM AN UNEXPECTED SOURCE

Introduction

An old friend of mine, who now works for GlaxoSmithKleinBeecham (now that is a mouthful) on the Pharmaceutical side, rang me up and invited me to join him on a trip to the “Medical Devices” Exhibition at the NEC in Birmingham. Most people, who felt in need of a break, would go to Brighton and spend a day on the beach eating chips and doughnuts with a pint or two of the local ale to wash things down. Sadly, it appears that I might be in need of psychiatric attention, and so we opted for the M42 option.

It was good to see the NEC again (definitely need something medicinal for this condition), and we were quickly into the main hall and surrounded by catheters, hip joints, rubber cardiac grommets, drip lines, shunts, surgical tools and other medical paraphernalia that made the eyes water just at the thought of the end uses.

Adverse first impressions can spoil an enjoyable day out, and at this juncture it seemed imperative to have a good dose of caffeine to put things back into perspective.

Regulatory issues

The first glimmer of hope came from a conversation with SafePharm Laboratories, because they do raw material registration in Europe, USA and Japan. Though they specialised in Pharmaceutical raw materials, they were also quite conversant with the necessary procedures to obtain EINECS numbers and other notification and registration information. In the light of the many requests received each year on this subject, this may be a solution that is useful to many raw material suppliers and their agents.

Packaging ideas

For the very first time, I am going to give some packaging ideas an airing. Marketing are trying to cram ingredient labelling information, satisfy dual labelling for Europe and the USA, and have all the product information in umpteen different languages. The major use of space is undoubtedly taken up by the longer Latin names for the plant materials and this is the flimsy excuse for mentioning it in this month’s column!

Kenilworth had a label that was a band on top of a band, except the outer band had a rotating

window that revealed the text on the inner band. All the important product information and marketing descriptions could be placed on the outer sleeve, with all the boring but necessary information placed on the inner sleeve. It seemed a very clever way of almost doubling your potential print area.

It is always difficult to tell your consumer about the other products in the range, or to have anything like enough space to tell the consumer about the expensive natural ingredients that have been incorporated into your product. The usual option is to have a leaflet, but these require topping up at the point of sale and are the target of compulsive leaflet collectors who strip them out in vast numbers only to throw them away on the street outside. Denny Brothers had a couple of clever options. Both were credit card size – one was a label that opened out into a full sheet of A4 paper, the other a series of small credit-card sized leaves. The information potential was colossal.

Use of recycled materials

Remember those fibre-based egg boxes? The technology appears to have moved on and there were some excellent samples on display from Hartmann that showed how this 100% recycled material could be moulded into boxes, straight-on-trays, and other areas where vacuum forming might be employed using less environmentally kind materials. Unlike egg boxes, the finish was quite smooth on one side and capable of taking an embossed design. The colour was a creamy white.

Silver possibilities

For those of you who worry about the germs growing on your toothbrush or tooth mug, or who lie awake at night dreaming about the mould growing in the refrigerator, then help would appear to be at hand. Agion sell a silver inorganic zeolite that can be moulded into plastics to leave them almost permanently preserved. It should meet the criteria of being called natural. This cannot be used as a preservative, because it is not believed that this material has not been cleared for Annex VI of the Directive. It can be used in the hardware items, such as roller balls, razors, toothbrushes or other items that might carry contamination to the skin.

Not natural at all

If you have been looking for those strange nose strips, false nails, nail transfers, bunion pads or just plain printed sticking plaster, then Scapa Medical had every sticky possibility that you were ever likely to want.

Conclusion

From the most unlikely source came a handful of ideas that could be extremely useful for the future. Somebody once said that if you attend a conference or exhibition and succeed in coming away with only one idea, then that trip has been a success. I guess I was even luckier than that, because in addition to catching up on old times with a good friend and colleague, and finding many ideas, I also bumped into Vivien Brockwell (ex SPC) now with Manufacturing Chemist, who would like to be remembered to all her friends! The catheter and spare valve for a heart will no doubt come in useful, not so sure what to do with the silicon ear grommet. Please do not bother to write in and tell me!

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