Hospital Gowns Go High Tech

(NAPSA)—Over the past 75 years, the medical field has undergone an amazing transformation involving such advanced technologies as the ultrasound, pacemaker and MRI. Yet much to the dismay of many a modest patient, at least one area of health care has remained relatively unchanged: the hospital gown.

Throughout the years, the standard cotton gown has remained drafty, sometimes threadbare and even stained. Worse, the limited coverage is notorious for leaving patient backsides exposed.

The good news is that the much maligned gown has undergone a makeover of sorts. A number of hospitals now give out a single-use hospital gown, known as the Bair Paws system. It provides full coverage while warming patients before, during and after surgery. This warmth brings a bounty of benefits to both patients and medical facilities.

More Warmth, More Control

The gowns offer patient-adjustable warmth thanks to a connected warming unit. This warmth, along with the ability to manage their own comfort, can reduce anxiety in patients prior to surgery.

"You're warm. You're cozy. I think that's how many of our patients feel. We've had nothing but good reports. They just love it," says clinician Karen Neugeberger.

However, facilities and patients may benefit the most from what the gown can prevent, rather than what it provides.

Hypothermia, a core body temperature below 96.8 degrees, has been called one of the most frequent, preventable surgical complications and affects 14 million patients each year. It has been associated with increased rates of wound infection, longer hospital stays and higher mortality rates. In fact, several national health care initiatives are urging hospitals to take measures to prevent hypothermia.

New hospital gowns protect patients' safety—and dignity.

In many cases, the induction of anesthesia is the primary trigger for hypothermia, reducing the body's ability to regulate temperature and allowing its core temperature to drop.

When used before surgery, the new gowns can help maintain this core body temperature by "banking" a supply of heat. The gown can also travel with the patient into surgery, providing continuous forced-air warming. After surgery, the system again offers the comfort of patient-controllable warmth.

In her role as a post-op nurse, Christine Yarborough sees the difference this "hi-tech" hospital gown can make. "We take the temperature first and 99.9 percent of the time [the patients] are warm. They are simply more comfortable. They don't have the complications of hypothermia and can be discharged sooner."

For more information, visit www.bairpaws.com.