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INFECTION CONTROL EDITION

Thibaut Hyvernat, CEO

Raising the Bar in Sterilization Packaging Solutions

STERIMED Infection Control

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STERIMED Infection

By Alex D'souza

While it's one thing to sterilize medical equipment, it's a whole another ball game to ensure that these devices stay sterile for—long until they are used or reused again. This is where sterilization packaging exhibits its innovative mettle using porous packaging material that not only enables sterilization but also ensures the sterility maintenance of the packed devices up to the point of use.

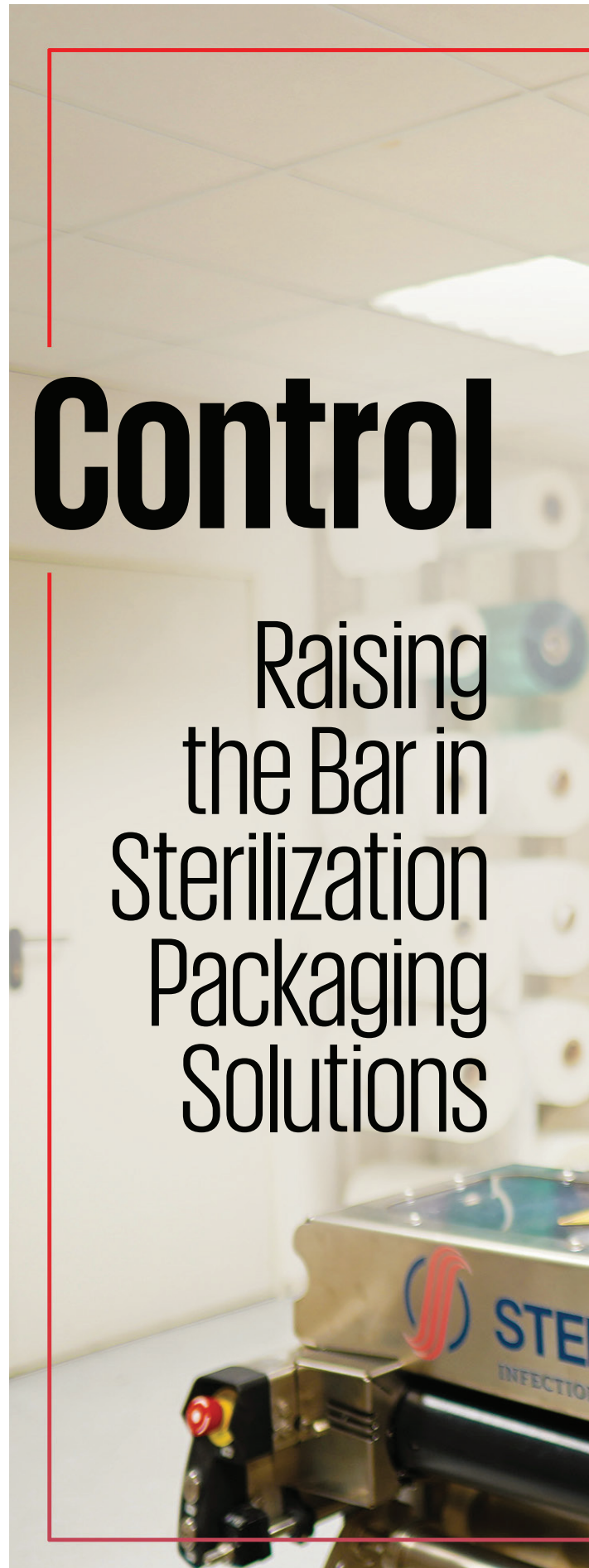
Sterilization packaging plays a huge role in combating infections and diseases within hospitals and clinical environments. It has long been a norm for the healthcare space, becoming a glorified one in the battle against COVID-19. Although its end-goal is the same, the means and methods towards achieving the same have certainly evolved. And STERIMED Infection Control can, in many ways, be regarded as an entity that has dictated the evolution, growth, and democratization of sterilization packaging. The company shines as an innovative holistic provider of sterilization packaging solutions for Medical Device Manufacturers (MDM). They also offer sterilization materials for manufacturing hospital pouches, reels, and wraps, and as well provides ready to use solutions for patient care units. It can be rightly regarded as a company that aligned itself in tune to evolving sterilization technology and packaging landscape.

Continuing the Legacy in Sterilization Packaging

Legacy, self-sustenance, and exclusiveness are the three terminologies that best describe STERIMED. The company's humble beginnings date back to 1911 in the south of France, with their parent company being paper manufacturer. Over the following decades, the entity carved a niche in manufacturing paper for sterilization packaging.

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Raising the Bar in Sterilization Packaging Solutions



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◀ Thibaut Hyvernat,
CEO

STERIMED
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The advent of the 21st century witnessed STERIMED spinning off from the parent company to position itself as an entity that aims to excel at any and all fronts of sterilization packaging. Today, STERIMED holds a strong presence in EMEA, North and South America, and Asia, with 8 production plants, 9 warehouse sites and 20 sales offices across the three continents. From an operational point of view, the company enforces a strategic growth plan, rolling out tailor-made solutions that cater to a growing and increasingly diverse customer base, including medical device manufacturers and those who'd need materials for sterilization packaging. STERIMED has also embraced a firm acquisition policy with regard to its market dominance.

Many of the company's competitors are large "food packaging" players for whom sterilization packaging may be just one of many business fronts. These players may not understand the deeper nuances specific to sterilization packaging in healthcare or even innovate in tune to market needs. They may also not be able to scale their operations or deliver custom solutions. On the other hand, sterilization packaging and the whole gamut of associated services have been the exclusive forte of STERIMED.

Novel Sterilization Packaging Materials

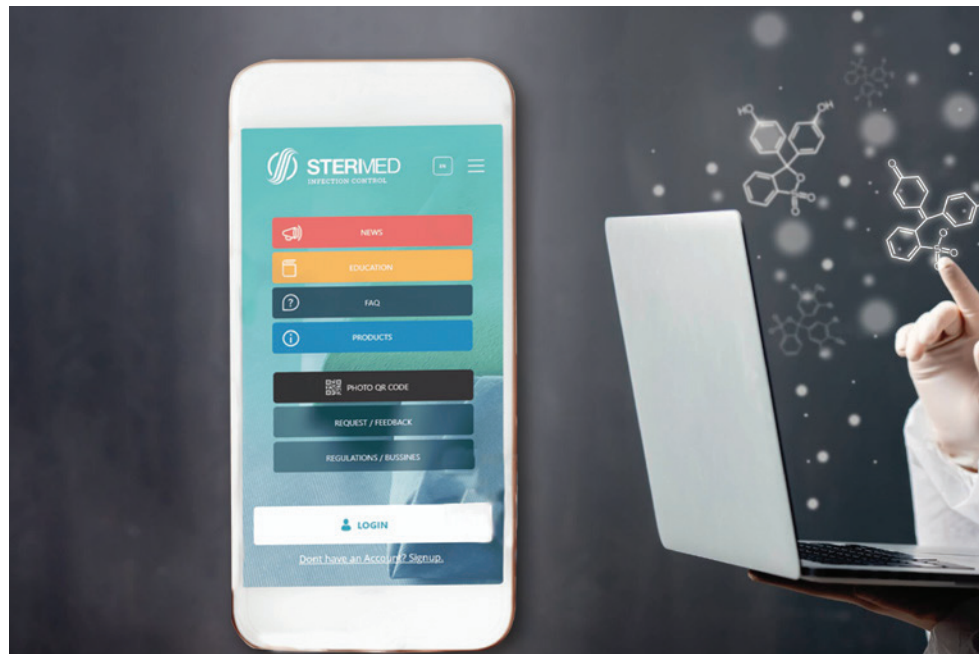
STERIMED's proprietary Propypel materials built with paper and reinforced substances are ideal for manufacturing pouches and tubing for sterilization in patients care units. The Propypel variants cover the whole scale in terms of performances and size/weight requirements for pouch/tubes for hospital steam sterilization.

Ethypel and Polybond, built from paper (cellulose), and natural fibers with synthetic binding (polymer reinforced) respectively, are STERIMED's porous web materials for industrial use. These, along with STERIMED's film web

materials like Ethyflex and Ethyform, as well as with in house coating and printing possibilities, are ideal for the packaging of single-use medical devices such as syringes, catheters, and IV sets, as well as much more demanding semi-rigid or rigid packaging. Medical devices packaged with these materials can be sterilized by EO as well as other methods (like irradiation) and assures at least five years of sterility. Ethypel-S is another variant of STERIMED's packaging material for industrial steam sterilization and is ideal for gauges, swabs, syringes, and lab sponges. In effect, with its range of products, the company provides top-to-bottom web sterilization packaging solutions.

materials. STERIMED's Sterisheet line of offerings features cellulose- and SMS-based sterilization wraps. The company also offers SMS/Cellulose, SMS/SMS bonded double wraps, along with other modes of interleaved double wraps for better bacterial filtration efficiency. These wraps can be employed for steam, as well as other sterilizations means that are generally used in hospitals.

The group also offer solutions dedicated to the management of the traceability of devices in the patients care units. Offering soft and hardware means, to get a full MD traceability is indeed another step toward infection prevention, which is now STERIMED core activity.



"Polybond is another sought after material in the manufacture of custom procedure trays (CPTs) that offer sterile packages—for disposable tools—which can be used as per the surgeon's preference," mentions Thibaut Hyvernat, the CEO of STERIMED. CPTs are being increasingly used by medical establishments to cut processing costs associated with reusable tools.

For hospitals, the company primarily provides packaging for sterilizing reusable

With its newly acquired foot print in Fuzhou, China, the group also produces and markets medical films: Green Sail—Chinese leader in this field—has joined the group early 2020. The range covers flexible and formable films, compatible for industrial sterilisation means as well as for steam.

One step further, EEE—leading medical packaging manufacturer in Mexico and Latin America—has also joined the group in late 2019. This enables the supply of

performed Sterile Barrier Systems (SBS) to the group customers in this area: sterilisation pouches and bags, as well as other infection prevention products (like sterilisation indicators).

Delivering Unmatched Value

STERIMED can even develop custom solutions as per the customer's needs. The company can be the go-to partner for customers to brainstorm innovations in packaging design and packaging materials, which, in many ways, stands as alternatives to non-renewable-based products. "We understand that although sterilization packaging is key to the operations of medical device



manufacturers, they are not packaging experts. Accordingly, STERIMED also rolls out regular training and education sessions globally, open to all manufacturers, whether or not they use STERIMED's materials," adds Thibaut Hyvernat. Through these sessions, the company distills and conveys decades of knowledge in packaging standards and solutions, which stands to benefit personnel at sterilization centers as well as quality, production and

compliance divisions of medical device manufacturers.

All of STERIMED's sterilization packaging materials are made mainly from renewable resource-based content via sustainable processes. Thibaut Hyvernat prides on the fact that the company uses biomass energy in their medical paper production. Also, STERIMED's global manufacturing capacity enables them to carry out all processes internally and seamlessly, be it coating, printing, slitting, sheeting, or thermo-bonding of materials. This reduces operational costs and makes the packaging solutions more affordable for the clients. With such a broad manufacturing footprint for sterilization packaging material, STERIMED is often the partner of choice for medical device manufacturers looking to outsource their industrial activities related to sterilization packaging and enhance the time to market.

Hyvernat shares an instance that is indicative of the speed, scalability, and flexibility that STERIMED can achieve with respect to production turnaround. STERIMED helped address the shortage of surgical masks in France when the country was nearing the peak of its COVID-19 crisis. As sterile barrier material manufacturers themselves, STERIMED was quick to qualify a product manufactured by one of its customers. The group could also get all legal authorizations and logistics solutions thanks to the extensive international supply chain infrastructure and regulatory affairs department that it had set up over the years. In a couple of weeks, the company rolled out its own branded range of masks, which sold 25 million units in six weeks.

STERIMED has been gradually growing and establishing a firm foothold in the sterilization packaging space. And one could perceive that, coincidentally or not, the company, at the time of need, was ready to scale and cater to the unexpected surge in demand and expertise for sterilization packaging that COVID-19 bought about.


Geared to a Promising Future

Owing to the several USPs pertaining to their solutions and business conduct, STERIMED has continually witnessed a strong growth rate internationally. Perhaps the factor that drives the company to newer heights is its motivated and dedicated workforce. Employees spread globally across all of STERIMED's branches are employed through direct contracts, without the involvement of a third-party entity. STERIMED practices a profit-sharing business model that augments employee satisfaction and commitment. Moreover, the company's leadership team encourages a flat organizational structure, which warrants employee involvement and growth.



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All in all, STERIMED has succeeded in providing the right sterilization packaging for medical devices. Looking ahead, the company will continue to innovate and strive to hyper specialize in sterilization packaging, exploring various possibilities about packaging material properties and manufacturing, which would ultimately allow them to be much more specific in catering to their clients, and offer them tailor-made solutions. In parallel, STERIMED is also focusing on offering sterilization packaging material validation and testing services, which is another glaring need that medical device manufacturers and hospitals have. Evidently, STERIMED has positioned itself as an entity that holistically understands the sterilization packaging space, and their strategic road map promises to benefit the domain. 

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*The annual listing of 10 companies that are at the forefront of providing
Infection Control solutions and impacting the industry*