

# Mass. doctor invents product to curb hospital-acquired infections

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Saints Medical Center is pleased to announce that Richard H. Ma, M.D, chair of its hospitalist department, has received a patent for a lightweight plastic cover for stethoscopes that will dramatically reduce hospital-acquired infections.

Stethguard is a V-shaped clear plastic cover that protects the head of the stethoscope up to its neck, where most of the germs and bacteria are located. Saints Medical Center will be the first hospital in the country putting Stethguard into practice.

A study conducted in 2009 by the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey-Robert Wood Johnson Medical School showed that roughly one out of three stethoscopes used by emergency department personnel contained the virus [methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus](#) (MRSA) . Additionally, the study showed that the longer the instrument remains un-sanitized, the higher the probability that it carries the MRSA virus.

"Using this cover will help curb nosocomial hospital-acquired infections," Dr. Ma said. "I developed this cover in response to the alarming rise nationally of these types of infections".

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) advise [stethoscope](#) cleanings between patient exams and the use of dedicated room equipment for patients carrying a communicable disease and in isolation. However, compliance to this policy is often in the 50 percent range.

The entire staff at Saints Medical Center will be trained on the Stethgaud protocol. "We are committed to minimizing [infection](#) rates and cross-contamination," Saints Medical Center CEO Stephen J. Guimond said.

Beginning in 2008, Medicare began monitoring hospital-acquired infections (errors) and began basing reimbursements on the level of errors. By utilizing the Stethguard, hospitals can minimize errors and increase reimbursements.

"As healthcare providers, we are entrusted with our patient's health and well being. As such we must do everything in our power to avoid inadvertently infecting our patients," Dr. Ma said.

Provided by Saints Medical Center

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