



Guest Services

by William D. Frye, Ph.D., CHE

New product provides immediate response for heart attack victims

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I can't believe that it has taken so long for someone to introduce such a simple product that can save lives. I also can't believe that I or anyone else has not thought of this sooner. What I am referring to is an emergency aspirin dispenser for heart attacks.

Just introduced in August 2010, Advent Consumer Healthcare distributes the At Heart® Emergency Aspirin Dispenser, a unique patented dispenser that provides the fastest possible access to an emergency dose of aspirin tablets. Each dispenser contains two blister-sealed 325 mg aspirin (NSAID) tablets with three-year expiration dating. It measures just three inches in length; so that it can be carried on a keychain, or in one's pocket or purse.

Packaged for convenient access

But these emergency dispensers can also be strategically located throughout a lodging property for immediate access when a guest starts to exhibit signs of a heart attack. An emergency dispenser can be kept at the front desk or in a cash register, and underneath the hostess stand of a restaurant, behind the bar, in each office of the hotel, even on housekeeping carts or carried by security and engineering personnel. The packet is that small and convenient.

When needed at the onset of a heart attack, have someone call 9-1-1 for assistance and then pop one aspirin through the foil lined blister pack and ask the heart attack victim to chew it. Numerous studies have shown that chewing an aspirin at the first sign of a heart attack can significantly improve the chance of survival. Each year about 1 million Americans will suffer a first or recurrent heart attack, and some 500,000 will not survive it. The majority of all heart attack deaths occur before a victim can get to a hospital. Yet, aspirin remains largely underutilized at the onset of heart attacks. This is mostly because aspirin typically are not conveniently accessible when needed and away from home.

Unlike a conventional bottle of aspirin, which always seems difficult to find when wanted, the tablets in the emergency dispenser remain sealed and sanitary until needed in an emergency. The red plastic dispenser is easy to spot and the flat oblong design allows the dispenser to be affixed to an easily accessible location by tape or Velcro, or hung from a small hook or loop. These dispensers are available at commercial pharmacies such as CVS for approximately \$4.39; certainly a small price to pay when a guest is experiencing a heart attack. With automated external defibrillators (AEDs) costing at least a thousand dollars or more per unit and requiring training to use them, placing AEDs in multiple locations throughout a hotel may not be economically feasible. While emergency aspirin dispensers are not a substitute for AEDs, by placing dispensers throughout the hotel, hopefully hotel personnel will not need to use an AED if it can provide aspirin on a moment's notice when a guest complains of chest pains or exhibits other warning signs of a heart attack.

From a liability perspective, hotels have little to fear as long as they keep the dispensers away from small children. It takes more than one or two aspirin for a person to overdose and do harm to themselves. However, never insist that a guest chew the aspirin, but always offer it as an option when a guest experiences signs of a heart attack. These warning signs may include chest pain or discomfort, discomfort in other areas of the upper body such as arms, back, neck, jaw or stomach, shortness of breath, nausea, sweating, and/or lightheadedness. Most heart attacks start slowly, with mild pain or discomfort, and then accelerate, thus affording time for the victim to chew an aspirin.

Pictured right:: Measuring approximately 3" long by 0.75" wide, this emergency aspirin dispenser can be strategically located throughout a hotel and carried by managers and other hotel personnel with their "work" keys in order to offer an immediate response to a heart attack victim.



Why aspirin works

According to Harvard Medical School's Family Health Guide, most heart attacks develop when a cholesterol-laden plaque in a coronary artery ruptures. Relatively small plaques, which produce only partial blockages, are the ones most likely to rupture. When they do, they attract platelets to their surface. Platelets are the tiny blood cells that trigger blood clotting. A clot builds up on the ruptured plaque. As the clot grows, it blocks the artery. If the blockage is complete, it deprives a portion of the heart muscle of oxygen. As a result, muscle cells die — and the victim suffers a heart attack.

Aspirin helps by inhibiting platelets. Only a tiny amount of aspirin is needed to inhibit all the platelets in the bloodstream; in fact, small amounts are better than high doses. But since the clot grows minute by minute, *time is of the essence*. If the victim chews a 325 mg aspirin for thirty seconds and then swallows it (without water), within approximately five minutes the platelet activation will become less activated and inhibited. This can buy the victim more time until professional rescue help arrives and help stave off the onset of sudden cardiac arrest, or worse, death. But remember, if something as simple as aspirin is not readily available, the victim's condition will likely worsen.

So do the right thing and do the smart thing. Recognize that a guest or employee will likely have a heart attack on your property at some point and plan to help save their life now. Place these emergency dispensers throughout the property now and perhaps save someone's life...maybe even yours. ✧

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