

Germs not wanted

Kusch+Co provides hygiene-optimised furniture with appealing design aesthetics, and has established their own line of products, fittingly named Kuschmed.



The extremely rapid and global spread of the coronavirus provides a convincing proof that the well-thought-out preventive hygiene concepts are now more important than ever before. This realization not only applies to clinical wards, but is relevant to everyday situations as well. An extremely important role may be reserved for hygiene-oriented seating. The company Kusch+Co shows how this concept is put into practice.

In much-frequented environments, where many people come together, the risk of catching a disease through droplet or smear infection is extremely high. Whereas a virus, by the current state of scientific knowledge, can only survive for a couple of hours or, at the most, a few days, on surfaces, bacteria and other micro-organisms are able to hold out for several months and to further spread out. This poses a very dangerous risk to persons with a fragile health – however, in view of the multi-resistant germs, which are on the rise in hospitals and healthcare facilities, even the lives of healthy persons are in danger.

Clean first before disinfecting!

Smear infections – i.e. the transmission of pathogens through surfaces on human organisms – could be easily avoided, provided that the surfaces are regularly cleaned and subsequently immediately thoroughly disinfected with appropriate disinfectants. This sequence offers the best possible hygiene: cleaning is indispensable, as it removes all the dirt and stains, as the pathogens are often embedded and nested inside them, and therefore possibly out of range for disinfectants. Even hospitals often experience difficulties to adhere to this sequence – even though they are required to compile a hygiene plan, document and provide evidence of every step. The German Association of Applied Hygiene

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(VAH) regularly issues a list of approved disinfectants along with instructions. This list is relevant to hospitals, medical practices, ambulatory healthcare centers, day hospitals and nursing homes. The Infection Protection Act, revised in 2011, lays down that every scientifically validated measure has to be taken in order to prevent the transmission of nosocomial infections, i.e. hospital-acquired infections.

Hygienic seating since 2006

The correct implementation of hygiene measures, and especially the reliable disinfection of surfaces, is extremely training- and cost-intensive. On top of this: even with the prescribed procedures, it is not always possible to efficiently reduce the number of germs on some surfaces. Especially the use of inappropriate materials as well as an unsuited construction may compound the efficiency of a disinfection cycle. Bearing this in mind, Kusch+Co developed its brand kuschmed in 2006, and ever since, they have been systematically improving this hygiene concept tailored to seating. All these products have been co-developed with renowned hygiene specialists and subsequently improved based on active feedback.

Partnership in baseline studies

In the past years, Kusch+Co has actively participated in scientific studies – e.g. in the Project hybau+ (constructional hygiene in hospitals) as well as in the follow-up study KARMIN (hospital architecture, microbiomes and infections in hospitals). These studies were conducted with the aim of providing a better basis for decision-making, for instance, whether, in the face of the rise of multi-resistant germs, German hospitals should have more single rooms – or whether in terms of infection prevention, double patient rooms can provide the same hygienic safety. This project, co-financed by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research within the framework of government-funded project “Zwanzig20” and as part of the German Research Association “InfectControl 2020, is running until the end of 2020.

Arn as master products in mock-up patient rooms

In their capacity as industrial partner, Kusch+Co has furnished the mock-up patient room within the framework of the KARMIN project, which is slated to be unveiled in the autumn of 2020. Among other products, the mock-up features the Arn chair: the hygiene experts meticulously tested the mechanical cleaning properties of the plastic and aluminium surfaces. Arn passed with flying colours. Next to the excellent hygienic quality, Arn’s outstanding design quality accounts for the selection as master product.

Hygiene-oriented and aesthetic

The focal point of all kuschmed products is on two aspects: firstly, they should not compromise on neither comfort nor aesthetics, secondly, they must feature intelligent solutions aimed at facilitating the disinfection measures. In order to achieve these goals, they seek the advice of experts, as was the case for the seating series uni_verso, designed by Norbert Geelen. “One of the most renowned German authorities on hygiene has recommended this type of plastic as well as

the texture for the seat shells, and tested the cleaning properties”, explains Ingo Bandurski from Kusch+Co. “The independent Hygiene-Institute in Berlin confirms that the series uni_verso represents the best compromise for use in hospitals.” This statement specifically refers to the textured seat shell. From a hygienic point of view, an extremely smooth surface may be desirable, however such a surface would be to the detriment of the non-skid protection. There would be a risk that immobile patients slide down and fall out of the chair. The uni_verso variations meet a variety of essential requirements: not only are these chairs hygiene-oriented, they are extremely heavy-duty and have a low flammability.

What are the qualities of a hygiene-oriented product?

A good question indeed, what are the qualities of hygiene-oriented products? “In essence, it is a combination of several criteria,” says Ingo Bandurski. The first goal is to minimize the gap sizes, i.e. when joining parts together, there should be no clearance between them, as these “dead spaces” are extremely difficult to clean and therefore risk turning into a breeding ground for germs. Secondly, both the materials and the surfaces must not be absorbent – Kusch+Co achieves this through pore-sealing coatings and dense laminated plastics. “For the Arn series, we use a self-sealing upholstery technique, the fabric is invisibly fixated and prevents the ingress of liquids or dirt into the foam.” A special seam technique is used to guarantee the best possible cleaning. In fact, all used materials have to be compatible with intensive disinfectants, such as O2-separators or virucidal agents. Because: in spite of the optimized hygienic properties, a regular disinfection cycle is the non plus ultra – but the hygienic properties facilitate the process and improve the outcome.

On request, Kusch+Co has an antibacterial coating with silver ions on offer. The activated silver ions penetrate into the bacteria’s cells and destroy them, thus inhibiting their growth. “The bacteriostatic effect is immense, as the number of germs is drastically reduced on the surface. Nevertheless, these surfaces require regular cleaning and disinfection as well.”

Professional advice

Whether a specific antibacterial coating makes sense, heavily depends on the individual circumstances. “Furniture is in the immediate contact range of people, and therefore should be part of the risk assessment.” Kusch+Co is happy to act as counsellor for planners and operators. “We can recommend certain series and materials to match the hospital’s hygiene plan and assist them in meeting the requirements,” explains Ingo Bandurski. Next to the standardized products, this company is capable of realizing customer-specific hygienic solutions – in case there are added requirements. “Higher load capacity, increased seat height for persons with a disability, fire prevention and durability can coexist with the hygienic requirements”.

New hygiene concepts

In the past, Kusch+Co assumed that the buying department used to be the primary contact for hygiene-related matters. In the meantime, the responsibility has shifted towards the executive level. And it will most likely stay that way: “We believe that

the corona pandemic will permanently sharpen our general hygiene awareness. Each dining room, each staff restaurant, each open space office that is frequented by many different persons poses a certain risk.” Ingo Bandurski is convinced that this will lead to more stringent hygiene requirements – even in environments that weren’t affected until now. Kusch+Co has the right products for a better hygienic safety.

1 In their capacity as industrial partner, Kusch+Co has furnished a mock-up patient room for the KARMIN Research Project. The room will be unveiled in the autumn of 2020. Next to the hygienic properties, the Arn chair was also selected as master chair for its design aesthetics (Design by Scaffidi & Johansen). Photo: Tom Bauer / IIKE TU Braunschweig

2 The hygiene-oriented seating from Kusch+Co is comfortable and aesthetic at the same time. In this photo, the multifunctional chair Arn (Design by Scaffidi & Johansen), Photo: Kusch+Co

3 Ideally suited for all environments where hygiene plays a key role. The seating series Arn from Kusch+Co. Photo: Kusch+Co

4 The materials as well as the surfaces must not be absorbent. This is one of many criteria that hygiene-oriented seating should fulfil. Kusch+Co achieves this through pore-sealing coatings or dense laminated plastics. In this photo: the series Arn. Photo: Kusch+Co

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5 The Arn chair is characterized by clean and elegant lines. Next to the aesthetics, Arn features a self-sealing upholstery compound where the fabric is invisibly fixated, thus preventing the ingress of liquids and dirt into the foam. Photo: Kusch+Co

6 Ingo Bandurski is a trained Fire Prevention Officer as well Occupational Safety and Health Officer. For many years now, this expert is in charge of the Solutions at Kusch+Co, namely Fire Prevention, Hygiene, Bariatric Seating and Reduced Mobility. He boasts profound knowledge of the production and technical possibilities. Photo: Kusch+Co

7 Though a smooth seat shell would have been desirable from a hygienic point of view : the textured seat shell of series uni_verso (Design by Norbert Geelen) is extremely important, providing much-needed support to immobile patients. Hygiene experts confirms that the series uni_verso represents the best compromise for use in hospitals. Photo: Kusch+Co

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About Kusch+Co

Shaping the way we sit – Kusch+Co’s mission statement stands for more than 80 years of know-how in designing and producing market-oriented seating and interior design solutions as well as for their proficiency in the fields of Fire Prevention, Hygiene and Reduced Mobility.

With their renewed portfolio, Kusch+Co reacts to the changes occurring in the modern working world, to the new challenges in the healthcare sector and to the current requirements in airports and transit sites.

Kusch+Co – established in 1939 by Ernst Kusch and run as a family business in the following decades, until recently by Ricarda Kusch – became a part of the group of companies Nowy Styl, a leading European producer of comprehensive interior design solutions geared towards offices and public areas, in 1939.

Kusch+Co is a globally operating premium brand, employing in their headquarters in the Sauerland-based town of Hallenberg – the cradle of their entrepreneurial roots – approximately 250 people. Their network includes other subsidiaries and showrooms e.g. in Munich, Berlin, Paris, London, Brussels, not forgetting in the Dutch town of Culemborg.

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