

HidraMed Solutions’ sensitive approach to helping people with HS

Irish company HidraMed Solutions has developed an easy-to-use wound dressing system for people living with chronic wounds, in particular hidradenitis suppurativa (HS).

[Hidradenitis Suppurativa \(HS\)](#) is a debilitating disease of the skin affecting 1 in 100 people. It causes [lesions and wounds](#) to form on delicate areas of the body, such as the armpit and groin, but it can occur almost anywhere.

“These lesions require regular wound dressings, for which patients have limited options for effective care,” explained Suzanne Moloney, founder of [HidraMed Solutions](#). “Current dressings require adhesives for retention, which causes irritation and further skin damage.

We caught up with Moloney ahead of HS Awareness Week 2020, which will run from 1 June to 7 June.

“Due to the location of the wounds, dressings often peel away, leak or fall off causing anxiety and embarrassment to patients. Further to that, patients live with extreme pain and spend hours out of each week trying to manage their HS wounds, causing many to become unemployed, depressed and develop other health issues.”

Product development pipeline

Moloney's first product [HidraWear AX](#), is for managing HS in the axilla. "It is designed for women, but we have a men's version, and other products in the development pipeline that will be available later this year. "

HidraWear AX is a three-part kit for managing HS wounds that includes a super soft medical garment; a super-absorbent, body conforming wound pad; and an external fastening tab.

"The garment has perforations placed over the treatment area – the axilla for this product. The wound pad is placed against the skin under the garment and secured in place with the external fastening tab. HidraWear enables quick and easy dressing changes and provides secure dressing retention without the use of damaging adhesives on the surrounding skin."

Necessity is the mother of invention

Moloney recalls: "I founded HidraMed Solutions in order to develop a wound care range for people with HS, as a lot of current products on the market are not fit for purpose.

"I have HS. I've struggled with the disease and wound management for most of my life. Back in 2012, I had an idea after a particularly embarrassing and frustrating incident, and I wanted to try make it happen. Speaking to other people with HS subsequently motivated me further when I realised the problem was bigger than I thought.

"I owned and operated a small bakery at the time and had learned some of the ropes when it comes to running a business, but I had a lot to learn (understatement of the century) to learn when it came to medical devices and med-tech.

"I had been chipping away at my project, and in December 2017, I was accepted onto a programme at NUI Galway called BioExel, that gave me the training and support that I needed to really get going. I left the bakery behind me mid-2018 to focus all my time and attention on HidraMed Solutions."

Moloney lauds the level of supports that exist for start-ups in Ireland.

"There is so much support there for you every step of the way. From Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs), Enterprise Ireland and other organisations that provide advice, mentorship, funding and

other supports, it really is a great place to be an entrepreneur.

“As well as the supports, the start-up scene is great. Meeting other entrepreneurs through various programmes or competitions is invaluable. We have a lot of shared experiences but can also learn a lot from each other too.”

Lessons on starting up

Like all founders and entrepreneurs, the early days of HydraMed weren't straightforward. “I started out working on HydraWear on my own, and wasted a lot of time making silly mistakes and dealing with the wrong people. So, the first lesson I learned is to find the right people for each task. I tried to do a lot of it by myself, but didn't have the skills or knowledge I needed, so I was holding myself back.

“I would have made a lot more progress in 2012 if I had spoken to my LEO back then and gotten some sound advice. Having said that, there has been a surge in HS awareness and online communities in the past two-to-three years, so the timing is better in 2020 to be launching a HS specific product. “

Her advice to fellow founders is to look for opportunity everywhere. “Whether it's for funding or advice, Ireland is a great place for entrepreneurship and full of opportunity. You just have to find it and ask for it. Don't be afraid to ask for help too. Other entrepreneurs and advisers want to see each other succeed and want to help when they can. But don't overstep the mark either, be respectful of people's time if they are helping you out.

“Also learn to deal with the ups and downs, because being in a start-up is not all fun. There are some really tough times and big decisions that have to be made. Every day is different and brings a new challenge, so be mentally prepared for a rollercoaster and build mental resilience. Take time off when you need to too. Being burnt out does no one any good, and will damage the company and everything you've worked for.”

Like many businesses working through the Covid-19 crisis, a focus on agile working practices have served HydraMed Solutions well.

“We are in the lucky position to be able to make changes relatively quickly within the organisation. We are a small team, and while everyone has their set roles, everyone has an open mindset and is prepared to move outside their comfort zone and try new things. Our transition to working from home was quite smooth, because we had developed a protocol and agreed on set times for team meetings using Microsoft Teams.”

Pictured at top: Cate Russell, Reactors.ie, with HydraMed Solutions founder Suzanne Moloney

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