



# THINGS TO CONSIDER

## ULTRASONIC CLEANER OR MEDICAL GRADE INSTRUMENT WASHER

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends using an automated cleaner such as an ultrasonic cleaner or medical grade instrument washer “to improve cleaning effectiveness and decrease worker exposure to blood or sharps injuries.”<sup>1</sup> But, of the two options, which is safer and more efficient? When purchasing an automated cleaner, do your research and consider these 5 factors.

**1. MICROBIAL CONTAMINATION:** A 2016 study<sup>2</sup> showed that the average microbial contamination in an ultrasonic unit at the beginning of the day was 2,190 cfu/mL. That’s 83% higher than the EPA regulated microbial levels for potable water. This study suggests that even if ultrasonic solutions are changed regularly, there is still residual contamination from previous runs. The only way to mitigate this issue is to clean the ultrasonic chamber thoroughly at the end of each work day. A medical grade washer, conversely, uses fresh water and cleaning solution for each cycle, and some, like **SciCan’s HYDRIM**, even have a self-cleaning cycle that can be run periodically.

**2. STAFF SAFETY:** With an ultrasonic, there are many steps involving the handling of contaminated instruments, thereby increasing the risk of exposure to blood and body fluids, as well as the risk of sharps injuries. Alternatively, with a medical grade washer such as the **HYDRIM G4** and instrument cassettes such as **Hu-Friedy’s new IMS Infinity series**, all you need to do is inspect, load, unload, and wrap the cassettes for sterilization.

**3. TIME EFFICIENCY:** Medical grade automated washers were designed to improve the dental office’s business operations. For example, the **HYDRIM L** fits 10 full-size cassettes, allowing an office to clean and dry 200 instruments in as little as 40 minutes. The office will spend much less on labor for every 10 procedural set-ups compared to ultrasonic cleaning.<sup>3</sup>

**4. COST-IN-USE:** The time a medical grade washer saves translates into increased efficiency in the office, which ultimately leads to cost savings. The office saves money on labor as well as the cost to replace expensive instruments that can easily be damaged when not utilizing cassettes.

**5. PEACE OF MIND:** Most medical grade washers have the ability to electronically log cleaning cycle data. For example, **SciCan’s G4 technology’s DataLogger** automatically stores all the cycle data for the lifetime of the unit. This feature saves the office time by removing the need to manually log cleaning cycles. Moreover, it provides the office the peace of mind of always being prepared for any audit.

**IN SUMMARY:** Adding a medical grade washer to the office means knowing that patients and staff are safe, that the practice is meeting infection control and prevention recommendations, and that the team is saving time and money. Safety is priceless and backlogs in sterilization are costly; a medical grade washer is a worthy investment for today’s standard of care.



1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Summary of Infection Prevention Practices in Dental Settings. CDC. 2016. <http://www.cdc.gov/oralhealth/infectioncontrol/pdf/safe-care.pdf>. Accessed February 2, 2017.  
2. Molinari JA, Nelson P. Microbial contamination of a dental ultrasonic cleaning unit. *Dental Advisor*. 2016;33(1).  
3. New HYDRIM G4 dental instrument washer from SciCan. *Dentistry IQ*. April 4, 2013. <http://www.dentistryiq.com/articles/2013/04/new-hydrim-g4-dental-instrument-washer-from-scican.html>. Accessed February 2, 2017.