



Press Release

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Copan Diagnostics Inc. Takes Innovation in Preanalytics a Step Further, Developing Automation for Gram Slide Preparation



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In its endeavors to continuously make innovative strides in preanalytics and clinical microbiology, Copan Diagnostics announced this week that they will launch a groundbreaking new addition to its Walk-Away Specimen Processor, WASP® and to its line of automation. WASP® will now have an optional automatic Gram slide preparation module. Just as Copan's WASP® has automated tedious planting

and streaking tasks, Copan's new application, the Gram SlidePrep will allow clinical microbiology laboratories to automate the preparation work associated with Gram-stains.

The new Gram SlidePrep module comes in response to a high level of market demand for the automation of this step in specimen processing. Copan successfully launched WASP® two years ago, and after receiving several requests for this additional application, it began research and development on the Gram SlidePrep module. Committed to rapidly responding to customer needs, Copan is the first to introduce this type of automation in the market and credits its quick reaction time to an infrastructure in which all know-how and operations are maintained in-house. "We research, design and engineer, build, and test all of our products in-house at Copan. There are no outside subcontractors to delay our processes. Copan's teams of engineers, software developers and microbiologists are responsible for every stage of the progression, from research and development to final laboratory testing," said Norman Sharples, Copan Diagnostics' Executive Vice-President.

This latest application is an example of how truly modular the WASP® instrument is, allowing new tasks, such as the Gram SlidePrep to be added and giving customers the freedom to customize automation for their specific needs. Where competitive instruments would compel customers to purchase an entirely new device when upgrades or additions became available, Copan is able to offer the WASP® with or without certain applications with new modules as they become available. “Because each laboratory functions differently, we wanted the WASP® to accommodate each laboratory in their unique situation and for it to be a platform for fully automated liquid based microbiology,” added Sharples.

The automated Gram SlidePrep is designed to prepare a Gram slide after a sample has been inoculated onto culture plates by the WASP®. The instrument will make a smear, with a customizable amount of sample volume, spreading the specimen within a defined area of the slide. Patient information is then immediately printed onto the slide using an inkjet printer. Slides will then pass along a conveyor belt, where they are gently air dried until they are ready for unloading and fixing with Methanol or processing by the operator.

The Gram SlidePrep completes the entire process of automating specimen processing. The WASP® decaps specimen containers, plants, streaks and the Gram SlidePrep performs Gram slide preparation. Automation of specimen processing eliminates repetitive stress caused by opening, sampling and closing specimen containers numerous times each day, which can lead to fatigue and work related stress and injuries. Beyond the benefit of eliminating tedious tasks faced by laboratory technicians, automation in clinical microbiology allows precious qualified staff to be redeployed from repetitive laboratory tasks to functions that require judgment and interpretative skills. Improving efficiencies in the laboratory helps identify infectious agents faster, with greater precision and provides faster results to physicians.

“We continually receive very positive feedback from those who have seen or are using the WASP®. The instrument’s robust design and open platform allows the introduction of numerous modular capabilities, which we believe makes WASP® a tremendous asset to the modern microbiology lab. However, despite its current benefits and cost savings, we were continuously hearing one comment regarding a specific improvement which could complement the WASP® capabilities. Microbiologists wanted the capability to automate the preparation of Gram slides. We are proud to launch the Gram SlidePrep in response to this specific customer feedback,” said Sharples. “At Copan, we are continuously in contact with laboratory managers and staff. They are the front line of our industry and are in prime position to communicate to us the things which work best in the field, and how we can help facilitate their work. It is their suggestions and comments which allow us to continue our pursuit of innovation in preanalytics,” concluded Sharples.

The Gram SlidePrep will be unveiled at the Copan Diagnostics booth (#855), while attending the 110th General Meeting for the American Society for Microbiology in San

Diego, California this May. This module will be available for beta only in the USA during the fourth quarter of 2010.

About Copan Diagnostics, Inc.

With a reputation for innovation in preanalytics, Copan is the leading manufacturer of collection and transport systems in the world. Copan offers a complete range of microbial sampling products used for traditional culture analysis and molecular diagnostic assays. For more information, visit www.copanusa.com