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Rate of Skin Infections in High School and College Athletes Continues to Grow

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NORCROSS, Ga., Oct. 30 /PRNewswire/ -- A recent survey of nearly 650 athletic trainers across the U.S. revealed that in the past 12 months nearly 76 percent of the respondents' athletic programs, mostly high school- and college-based, bacterial or viral skin infections have developed. This is up from 73 percent in 2008 and 67 percent in 2007.(1) (2) The good news - infection rates of Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA), a type of staph infection that is resistant to many common antibiotics, stabilized at 49 percent, the same as reported in 2008. (2)

The survey, conducted every year since 2006 at the National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA) annual meeting, also showed a significant increase in athletic trainers' roles in educating key groups including *athletes* (87 percent, up from 80 percent in 2008), *coaches* (80 percent, up from 62 percent in 2008) and *athletes' families* (40 percent, up from 30 percent in 2008). This is important since these groups are often the "first responders" when it comes to early identification and treatment of a skin infection such as MRSA or sports-related injury.

"While we would like to see the estimated number of skin infections decrease, we are encouraged by the role athletic trainers increasingly play in educating and supporting athletes, coaches and families," said Marjorie J. Albohm, MS, ATC, president of NATA. "MRSA continues to be an issue our members face on and off the field, but so are heat exhaustion, H1N1 and head concussions. Athletic Trainers deal with everything from cuts and sprains to potentially life threatening injuries on a daily basis."

MRSA is usually spread from person-to-person through direct skin contact or contact with shared items or surfaces such as towels, used bandages, hot and cold tubs, or weight-training equipment that have come in contact with the bacteria. MRSA infections in the community are usually manifested as skin infections, such as pimples and boils that are red, swollen and painful. MRSA can be life threatening when it enters the body through scrapes and scratches, potentially leading to blood and joint infections, and pneumonia. As the number of cases of MRSA has increased in the community, so have contact sports-related infections. (cite)

To help prevent transmission of infections and illnesses such as MRSA, H1N1 or seasonal flu, it is often recommended that athletes wash with cleansers that contain 4 percent chlorhexidine gluconate (CHG). CHG bonds to the skin and continues to actively kill germs for up to six hours without leaving a residue. This offers protection between washings and during competition. CHG has been used in hospitals and operating rooms for decades to help prevent the spread of infection.

"Washing with a cleanser that contains CHG can be especially helpful in amateur sports, since many athletes at that level do not shower immediately before or after activities. By washing even just the hands and arms

before an activity, the risk of infection can be dramatically reduced," said Jack Doornbos, executive director, Molnlycke Health Care, the health care company that supported the survey.

In fact, last year the National Football League Players Association (NFLPA) noted that "the single most important thing for prevention is hand-washing with soap and water, or if MRSA is known to be present, with chlorhexidine (Hibiclens).(3)" Hibiclens® skin cleanser is one over-the-counter cleanser that contains 4 percent CHG and has been proven to kill germs on contact and bond with the skin to keep killing microorganisms for up to six hours without leaving a residue. The same cleanser with alcohol is available as a wipe called Hibistat® for on-the-go needs. Both are available at drug stores and pharmacies in the first aid section. For more information about CHG or to download free educational materials about MRSA and sports, visit hibiclens.com/athletes.html.

About Molnlycke Health Care US, LLC

Molnlycke Health Care US, LLC, consists of two divisions - Surgical and Wound Care. Focusing on prevention of surgically-related infections for both patients and healthcare workers, the Surgical Division (formerly Regent Medical Americas, LLC) encompasses the world's leading manufacturer and supplier of powder-free surgical gloves (Biogel® surgical gloves); the number one supplier (by value) of skin cleanser (Hibiclens® and Hibistat® antiseptics); and BARRIER® protective clothing. A leader in trauma and pain management, the Wound Care Division's market dynamics are driven by an aging population, higher incidence of pressure ulcers and increased home treatment. Visit www.hibiclens.com.

(1) Molnlycke Health Care, NATA survey of Athletic Trainers, June 2007.

(2) Molnlycke Health Care, NATA Survey of Athletic Trainers, June 2008.

(3) www.NFLplayers.com, "An Increasingly Common Bacterial Infection", November 28, 2008, Dr. Thom Mayer.

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Send comments and feedback to:

Peter Barfoot Managing Director, BioPortfolio Ltd.

UK Tel: (+44) 1300 321501

USA Voicemail and Fax: (+1) 415 680 2472

[Peter Barfoot peter.barfoot@bioportfolio.com](mailto:peter.barfoot@bioportfolio.com)

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