

Entrepreneur Promotes Healthy Bladder Management

"I have been blessed in my life to have the chance to make difference in people's lives all over the world. The great thing about investing is that I can support worthy causes and give people an opportunity they wouldn't otherwise have had."

We sat down with BioDerm CEO, **Gary Damkoehler** to find out why he's getting into the incontinence management business.

PIM: You've been involved in a number of healthcare organizations, including running JSA Healthcare for over 20 years. In fact, you retired in 2006, what made you come out of retirement and get involved with the incontinence management field?



DAMKOEHLER: I first became aware of the incontinence and wound care industry in 2005 when I first came across BioDerm and their new product, Men's Liberty. I've worked in healthcare for over 40 years, inspired by a feeling like there was something more I could be giving back to the world. I am blessed to have had so many opportunities to improve the lives of people all over the world.

I came back to work because I believe in this product. I know that the prevention of illness can improve people's lives and save money. I am appalled at the poor urinary management options available to men and women who have served their country honorably and who will forever live with the consequences of explosions, vehicle collisions and gunshots. Our service men and women deserve the absolute best.

When I first encountered Men's Liberty, I knew this could be a game changer for men with spinal cord injuries, prostate cancer and literally dozens of other illnesses. Incontinence is embarrassing; it's hard to talk about. But dealing with it is so important to people's quality of life. I come to work each morning enthusiastic about the possibilities for the day ahead. We're re-writing the rules in healthcare for managing incontinence. It's a whole new world out there and we're leading the charge. That's pretty darn exciting if you ask me.

PIM: What makes this product so different, so much better for men?

DAMKOEHLER: There is literally nothing else out there like Men's Liberty. It's truly a product that changes people's lives. Nearly 1.5 million Men's Liberty units have been used without a single reportable adverse event caused by the device including UTI and skin injury. Compare that to other outdated managements devices like indwelling catheters, condom catheters or diapers which have astronomical infection rates that result in additional medications, hospitalizations and even death. There is, quite simply, no comparison. We are head and shoulders above the rest.

The most important features of Men's Liberty are:

- a) It's completely external - There is nothing in Men's Liberty which goes inside the body. This eliminates one of the primary infection paths you find with indwelling catheters. As a completely non-invasive product, Men's Liberty is more comfortable, easier to apply, reduces the need for skilled nurses to manage incontinence and improves health outcomes.
- b) It's made from skin friendly hydrocolloid - hydrocolloid has been used in wound care for decades. It is safe, skin friendly, latex free and hypoallergenic. Quite simply, it's better for people's skin. It reduces or eliminates skin tears, injuries all the while maintaining a secure seal for 24-48 hours.
- c) It's covered by Medicare, most state Medic aids, VA/TriCare, Workers Compensation and most private insurances. Most of our customers can get a healthier product for little to nothing out of pocket which helps their bottom line.



PIM: You have mentioned prevention frequently as an overlooked component of healthcare – why is prevention so important you?

DAMKOEHLER: Too often, in my opinion, healthcare professionals focus on treating an illness. It's almost as though the disease is the important bit, not the person. I have a fundamentally different view. When I led JSA Healthcare, I made health improvement a priority and we made it profitable too. We focused on preventative care and we saw patients the same day if they were sick. That meant that people got the treatment they needed and dramatically reduced the number of patients who needed emergency treatment later on. Reducing hospitalizations made people healthier and in the end, it saved us money too! They say prevention is better than cure, and they're right.

That's one of the reasons I am such a believer in Men's Liberty. We have to break the cycle of recurring illnesses and focus on helping people lead a healthier, more active, more fulfilling life. It's about dignity, independence and the chance for people to reach out for something better. Men's Liberty is there to help the man with prostate cancer play with his grandkids without wearing a diaper, to help young veterans complete in adaptive sports competitions without having an accident and help the caregivers and loved ones do a little bit less heavy lifting.

PIM: In addition to your business investments, you are also a local philanthropist. Can you tell me a little bit about your other philanthropic projects?

DAMKOEHLER: I've been involved quite a few over the years but the one that has had the greatest impact on me has been Maiti Nepal. I worked in Nepal as part of USAID in the 1960s and fell completely in love with the country and the culture. In 2004, I became one of the primary donors supporting the charity, Maiti Nepal (<http://www.maitinepal.org/>), which rescues women and children sold into the sex

trade. The charity rescues women and children and helps them to recover from their traumatic ordeal and gain independence. The charity provides a safe haven including counseling, education and training so that women can gain their independence. They also provide housing to these women until they can get back on their feet.

Around the same time I also started collecting Tibetan antiquities. There are so many amazing pieces of history that are being lost everyday and I am passionate about preserving them so that generations to come can learn from them. Many of these treasures are currently being housed in the Damkoehler Gallery at the Museum of Fine Art in downtown St Petersburg. I am also an active member of the board of the Museum of Fine Arts and Admiral Farragut Academy where I also support a scholarship program for underprivileged young people who can benefit from advanced educational opportunities.

PIM: What motivates you to give back?

DAMKOEHLER: For me, it all comes back to a central belief in the fundamental resilience of the human spirit. We can triumph over adversity, but sometimes we need a little help. Whether that's a trafficked children's shelter in Nepal, a scholarship to attend a better school or a device that can make our veterans lives just a bit easier, it can all be a game changer in its own way.

Inset: Meet Men's Liberty User Mike McLaughlin

Mike is one of thousands of American heroes who are living with a spinal cord injury and his story is an inspiration for all of us. Mike was a specialist in the Army from 1988-92 and served in the Kentucky National Guard from 1992-95. He was stationed at Ft. Knox, Ft. Hood, Ray Barracks Germany and then deployed to Saudi Arabia for Operation Desert Shield and then Desert Storm. He was in Germany during the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Then one night, an accident changed his life forever. He woke up with a T1/T2 spinal cord injury and faced the daunting prospect of life in a wheelchair. For him, one of his biggest challenges was coping with urinary incontinence. Mike started dealing with his incontinence using condom catheters which gave him irritation and continuously popped off. He then went to the Foley catheter which gave him continuous UTI's. While reading



"The freedom Liberty has given me is priceless."

Paraplegia News he came across Men's Liberty. He got the samples, tried them, and has been a Liberty user now since 2003. He's healthier, happier and now an active competitor in the National Veterans Wheelchair Games. He has increased his activities by 50%, doesn't have to go to the doctors all the time, and is not in and out of the hospital with UTI's anymore.

Now, Mike enjoys hunting, fishing and competitive shooting, and is also the Sports Director/Team Coordinator for the Kentucky-Indiana chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of America. He will be competing at next year's National Veteran's Wheelchair games here in Tampa. He competes in archery, trap shooting, air rifle, and field events. This will be his 6th time going and competing at the wheelchair games. He prides himself in helping others during the Games.

"For those who are looking for something new, start with the best instead of dealing with the misery from the rest. The freedom Liberty has given me is priceless."