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TITLE: *Key criteria and physical properties of a textile for use in a feminine sanitary product*

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ABSTRACT:

The disposable sanitary protection (sanpro) market in the UK was worth £373million in 2008 (Disposable Paper Products, Key Note Ltd 2010). This huge figure does not complete the whole sanpro market however, as there are a wide variety of reusable products also available. The disposable market has a great, negative environmental impact in terms of energy to produce ('Life Cycle Assessment of Sanitary Pads and Tampons', Royal Institute of Technology Stockholm, 2006) and end of life waste, it is therefore timely for a new, more environmentally friendly product suitable for a wide spectrum of women.

This paper will investigate the essential properties and requirements of the textile required for a new sanitary product and will determine how relevant these properties are in terms of user experience both for wear and for disposal or after care.

Two main products are investigated; disposable sanitary towels and reusable sanitary towels. Examining the physical characteristics such as absorbency, wicking, density and antimicrobial properties of the textile gives an indication of the suitability of the material choices. Users' experience is also explored, as experiential data such as perceived comfort, dryness and reliability can only be determined by using the products. Research techniques have included focus groups and questionnaires.

This paper will establish the key criteria for external sanitary protection based on research and investigation into traditional and newly developed textiles with a focus on the importance of women's experience of existing product.