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DECONTAMINATION APPARATUS

The present invention provides a decontamination apparatus suitable for treating and decontaminating hospital equipment such as rubber or plastics breathing tubes, bags and fittings. It will be appreciated, however,
5 that the invention is not limited to this particular application.

In the past, considerable difficulty has been achieved in properly sterilising rubber or plastics items such as flexible breathing tubes. It is an object of the
10 present invention to provide an improved means for decontaminating equipment such as this in a compact and efficient manner.

Accordingly, the present invention provides a decontamination apparatus comprising a decontamination chamber
15 for holding and treating articles to be decontaminated, a lid arranged to provide access to said chamber for installing articles to be decontaminated and for removal therefrom, an ancillary chamber containing decontamination fluid supply and control means for said decontamination
20 chamber, said decontamination chamber comprising at least two regions so as to provide a first region wherein elongate articles such as elongate flexible breathing tubes can be suspended, and a second region shallower than said first region wherein smaller articles such as
25 breathing masks can be held or suspended, at least a lowermost portion of said first region

being defined by a trough into which decontaminating fluid can drain from said decontamination chamber, said decontamination chamber further including support devices for holding articles to be decontaminated, spray devices
5 arranged in both decontamination regions for spraying decontamination fluid into or over articles arranged in the decontamination chamber, and a distributing network comprising pipes and manifolds for transferring decontamination fluid from said trough to said spray
10 devices.

A preferred embodiment of the invention will now be described, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:-

Figure 1 is a sectional side elevation of a decontamination apparatus according to the invention.
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Figure 2 is a perspective view showing the washing chamber of the apparatus shown in Figure 1.

Figure 3 is an enlarged view of part of the spraying apparatus shown in Figure 1.

20 Figure 4 is a partly sectioned view showing a breathing tube in position within the apparatus.

Figure 5 is an enlarged section taken on line 5-5 of Figure 1 showing a pair of hose clamps for smaller breathing tubes.

25 Figure 6 is a sectional view showing a breathing bag in position on the apparatus.

Figure 7 is a sectional view taken generally on line 7-7 of Figure 1 showing a pair of masks positioned on rails supported within the washing chamber between upper
30 and lower jets.

Figure 8 is an enlarged sectional view taken on line 5-5 of Figure 1 but showing an alternative form of hose clamp for smaller breathing tubes.

Figure 9 is a view taken on line 8-8 of Figure 8.

35 Figure 10 is an enlarged perspective view of a tray positioned within the decontamination chamber.

Referring to the drawings, the decontamination

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apparatus comprises a vertically upstanding cabinet 10 divided into a decontamination chamber 11 and an ancillary chamber 12 by a stepped wall 13, having a horizontal upper shelf portion 14, a vertical centre step 15 and a floor 16. The decontamination chamber 11 is accessible by a hinged lid 17 which is rotatable about an axis 18 as shown to permit easy access to the chamber.

It can be seen that the arrangement provides a decontamination chamber having two identifiable regions - a rear section 20 extending from the underside of the hinged lid 17 to the floor 16 and a shallower forward section 21 extending above the upper shelf portion 14. The rear section 20 contains a heater element 22 located beneath a pair of removable gauze baskets 23.

The object of the dual nature of the decontamination chamber is to provide for treatment of long hoses or other elongate articles in the rear section simultaneously with the treatment of smaller articles in the remainder of the chamber. To this end, the apparatus is provided with a network of fluid supply pipes extending from a pump 24 located in the lower part of the ancillary chamber 12 so as to draw fluid from the decontamination chamber during operation of the apparatus.

The fluid supply network extends from the pump 24 through a vertical supply pipe 25 to a spigot 26 and two horizontal manifolds 27 and 28. A removable spraying

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assembly 29 engages with the spigot 26 as shown so that water can flow from the pipe 25 to an intermediate manifold 31 which supports a plurality of vertical spraying pipes 32. The pipes 32 are adapted to receive breathing bags 33 as best shown in Figure 6 and are provided with a plurality of spray holes 34 for directing fluid into the interior of the bags. The entire assembly 29 can be removed from chamber 11 for loading and unloading, as well as to provide access to the removable baskets 23.

10 The manifold 27 communicates with two downwardly directed nozzles 35 while the spigot 26 feeds at least one upwardly directed nozzle 36 as best shown in Figures 2, 3 and 7. These nozzles direct decontamination fluid in a spray pattern over articles positioned in the upper part of the decontamination chamber.

20 The upper manifold 28 is provided with a plurality of downwardly directed nozzles 38 for supplying decontamination fluid into the interior of elongate breathing tubes 39 vertically presented to the nozzles 38 and supported by a slotted rack 40 and hinged gate 40A. As best shown in Figure 4, each nozzle 38 includes an adjustable jet rod 49 for regulating the spray within the tubes. In operation, the lowermost ends of the tubes 39 are contained by the baskets 23 and extend into the fluid 41 at the bottom of the chamber 11.

 The decontamination chamber is also provided with racks such as 42, 43 and 60 to support articles such as masks 44 within the upper portion of the chamber as best shown in Figure 7.

Smaller breathing tubes 45 are accommodated by the intermediate manifold 30. The manifold 30 supports a plurality of horizontally extending nozzles 46 over which the upper end of the tubes 45 can be secured by spring loaded retention clips 47. Figures 8 and 9 show an alternative arrangement where retention hooks 47 are employed, supported by brackets 48.

10 With the various articles to be decontaminated located within the decontamination chamber and the lid closed, the decontamination cycle, once initiated, is controlled by conventional means. The apparatus admits water at 60°C to the level shown for a preliminary wash cycle. The preliminary wash continues for a predetermined time during which a suitable amount of detergent or other sterilising medium is added automatically to the water. At the completion of the preliminary washing cycle, the system replaces the used fluid with fresh water at 60°C and heats it to a higher temperature of, say, 75°C and then performs a rinsing or sanitizing cycle of predetermined
20 length.

At the completion of the sanitizing cycle, the water is removed and a fan drying cycle commences using filtered air supplied to the lower part of the decontamination chamber 11 by one or more fans 50 each provided with an outlet duct 51 containing a heating element 52 and a one way flap valve 53 for preventing water entering the fan during the decontamination process. The air is filtered by removable filter elements 54. The operation of the apparatus is such that it is automatically deactivated if the lid is opened at

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any time during the cycle.

Although the invention has been described with reference to a specific example, it will be appreciated by those skilled in the art, that it may be embodied in many other forms.



CLAIMS:-

1. A decontamination apparatus comprising a decontamination chamber for holding and treating articles to be decontaminated, a lid arranged to provide access to said chamber for installing articles to be decontaminated and
5 for removal therefrom, an ancillary chamber containing decontamination fluid supply and control means for said decontamination chamber, said decontamination chamber comprising at least two regions so as to provide a first region wherein elongate articles such as elongate flexible
10 breathing tubes can be suspended, and a second region shallower than said first region wherein smaller articles such as breathing masks can be held or suspended, at least a lowermost portion of said first region being defined by a trough into which decontaminating fluid can
15 drain from said decontamination chamber, said decontamination chamber further including support devices for holding articles to be decontaminated, spray devices arranged in both decontamination regions for spraying decontamination fluid into or over articles arranged in
20 the decontamination chamber, and a distributing network comprising pipes and manifolds for transferring decontamination fluid from said trough to said spray devices.

2. A decontamination apparatus as defined in Claim 1 in which at least one removable fluid permeable basket is
25 located in said trough, the decontaminating fluid draining therethrough.

3. A decontamination apparatus as defined in Claim 1 or Claim 2 wherein the distributing network for the first region includes a manifold located in an upper
30 portion of said first region, said manifold being provided with said spray devices.

4. A decontamination apparatus as defined in Claim 3 wherein the elongate articles comprise elongate breathing tubes, the spray devices being defined by a plurality of
35 nozzles downwardly directed for supplying decontamination fluid into the interior of said elongate breathing tubes.



5. A decontamination apparatus as defined in Claim 4 wherein each nozzle includes an adjustable jet rod for regulating the spray within the tubes.

5 6. A decontamination apparatus as defined in any one of Claims 3 to 5 wherein the support devices for elongate articles include a slotted rack and hinged gate from which the elongate articles can be suspended, the slotted rack and hinged gate being located below the spray devices.

10 7. A decontamination apparatus as defined in any one of the preceding claims wherein the spray devices and distributing network provided in the second region of the decontamination chamber are defined by a removable spraying assembly.

15 8. A decontamination apparatus as defined in Claim 7 wherein said removable spraying assembly releasably engages a spigot extending outwardly from a vertically extending supply pipe.

20 9. A decontamination apparatus as defined in Claim 7 or Claim 8 wherein said removable spraying assembly includes a manifold supporting a plurality of vertically disposed spraying pipes adapted for receiving articles such as breathing bags thereon, each pipe being provided with a plurality of spray holes for directing fluid into an article received thereon.

25 10. A decontamination apparatus as defined in any one of Claims 7 to 9, wherein said removable spraying assembly includes a second manifold provided with a plurality of horizontally extending nozzles over which the upper ends of tubular articles can be secured.

30 11. A decontamination apparatus as defined in Claim 10, and including spring loaded retention clips for securing the upper ends of the tubular articles to the upper ends of said horizontally extending nozzles.

35 12. A decontamination apparatus as defined in Claim 10, and including retention hooks and brackets designed to hold the upper ends of the tubular articles therebetween in order to secure them to the upper ends of



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said horizontally extending nozzles.

5 13. A decontamination apparatus as defined in any one of the preceding claims wherein said ancillary chamber contains a heater for supplying drying air to said decontamination chamber.

14. A decontamination apparatus as defined in any one of the preceding claims wherein said trough contains a heating element for heating decontamination fluid therein.

10 15. A decontamination apparatus substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to the accompanying drawings.
