CLAIMS

1. A method of preventing a decontaminated ultrasonic probe from contamination comprising the step of, immediately after disinfection, inserting the ultrasonic probe into a cover comprising a flexible elongate pouch and a mouth portion for inserting the probe into the pouch, the mouth portion comprising a deformably rigid portion, and deforming the mouth portion into a sealing engagement with a proximal end of the probe, wherein no undisinfected portion of the probe enters the pouch.

2. A method according to claim 1 wherein at least a portion of the decontaminated ultrasonic probe resides outside the pouch when sealed.

3. A method according to claim 1 or claim 2 wherein the pouch is formed from two opposed elongate sheets of plastic, each sheet having two parallel elongate sides and two parallel short sides, the sheets being fused on each elongate side and on a first short side, the second short side defining the mouth portion.

4. A method according to any one of claims 1 to 3 wherein the deformably rigid portion is a sealing means.

5. A method according to claim 3 wherein the mouth portion comprises a deformably rigid strip adjacent and disposed along the second short side.

6. A method according to claim 5 wherein the deformably rigid strip is a metallic or wire strip.

7. A method according to any one of claims 5 to 6 wherein the deformably rigid strip is a metallic or wire strip glued or fused to one elongate sheet of the pouch.

8. A method according to any one of claims 1 to 3 wherein the deformably rigid portion is a sealing means, and wherein the sealing means is a self adhesive strip.

9. A method according to any one of claims 1 to 3 wherein the deformably rigid portion is a sealing means, and wherein the sealing means is an integrated elastic strip.

10. A method according to any one of claims 1 to 3 wherein the deformably rigid portion is a sealing means, and wherein the sealing means is a Velcro$^{TM}$ strip.

11. A method according to any one of claims 1 to 10 further comprising the steps of applying to the pouch, when sealed, indicia identifying a unique sterilization cycle, and documenting said indicia against a record of a patient probed with said probe.