STUDY OBJECTIVE: In the face of heightened concerns over nuclear, biological or chemical (NBC) terrorist attack or accident, the federal government has mandated an increase in the number of positive and negative pressure isolation rooms. Currently these rooms represent a scarce hospital resource, especially in EDs that may have only 1 or 2 available. It would be useful to be able to create “on demand” isolation rooms to provide surge capacity and to meet federal guidelines. In this private-public partnership, we undertook the development and testing of a portable environmental control system that can create either positive or negative pressure isolation environments in an otherwise typical hospital or emergency department room.

This Alpha test was designed to determine the ability of the system to produce a stable positive or negative pressure environment, consistent with CDC guidelines, within typical emergency department patient care rooms.

MATERIALS AND METHODS: IsolationAirTM (Air Innovations, Syracuse, NY) creates positive or negative pressure through air-ducting mechanisms. The system also maintains room temperature and uses HEPA filtration and ultra-violet light to remove air contaminants within the patient room. The system can operate in complete isolation from the existing hospital HVAC system, or it can be tied to the existing system with air exchange limited to only unoccupied during test.

We tested IsolationAirTM in two separate ED rooms: a 125 square foot single-bed room and a 288 square foot two-bed room. Test parameters were taken from CDC guidelines for isolation rooms and included (1) create a minimum of 0.1" of water pressure gradient between the study room and the adjoining hallway space; (2) significantly reduce particle counts (0.5 microns or larger); (3) maintain ambient temperatures between 70°-75° F; and (4) provide a minimum of twelve complete room-air changes per hour.

RESULTS: In the single-bed room, IsolationAirTM was able to create 0.015 to 0.22" of positive pressure and -0.034 to -0.052 of negative pressure, reduce particle counts from 6,480 to 255 per cubic foot of room air, and maintain a temperature of 70°F. In the larger room, the system achieved 0.01" of positive pressure, -0.01" to -0.017 of negative pressure, reductions in particle counts from 34,254 to 1,630 per cubic foot, 16 room-air changes per hour, and a temperature maintained at 75°F.

CONCLUSION: IsolationAirTM met or exceeded CDC guidelines for positive- and negative pressure isolation environments in otherwise typical ED rooms. This technology could be useful to hospitals and EDs in their efforts to meet federal guidelines and ensure adequate surge capacity, particularly with regards to potential NBC events. This project was funded through a grant from the New York Indoor Environmental Quality Center Commercialization Assistance Program.

FEATURES:
- Rapidly converts any standard patient room into an isolation room in less than 1 hour
- Helps hospitals meet critical benchmarks established by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:
  - Surge Capacity: Isolation
  - Surge Capacity: Trauma and Burn
  - Preparedness for Pandemic Influenza
- Combines known technologies into an easy-to-deploy portable unit:
  - HEPA filtration for airborne viruses and bacteria trapped on the HEPA unit
  - Pressure control either negative or positive
  - Infectious disease control (TB, SARS, smallpox, etc.)
  - Protective environment control (burn, immunosuppressed) is positive
  - Temperature control – the room becomes isolated from the central system (Only air having passed through both UV and HEPA will be returned to hospital HVAC)
- Meets CDC, AIA, and ASHRAE guidelines for new construction or renovation:
  - 12 air changes per hour via HEPA filters
  - (Each IsolationAir unit conditions rooms up to 375 sqft with 8’ ceiling)
  - Pressure differential of 0.01" minimum between room and adjoining spaces
  - (May require additional seals around doors or other significant leak points in large rooms with poorly sealed doors.)
  - Continuous operation when plugged into emergency generator outlet
- Provides stable temperature control for patient comfort