Extruded medical rail clears bedside clutter

Unique three-channel profile delivers medical gases to patients without tangle of hoses and cables; improves both performance and appearance.

By ANDREA L. NYLUND, Contributing Editor

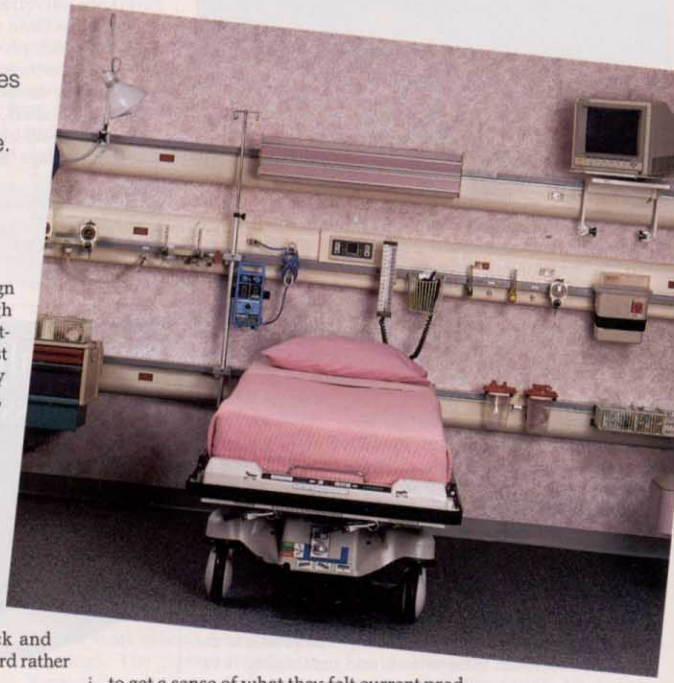
New concepts in industrial design have introduced some tough challenges for extruders like Atlanta-based William Bonnell Co. Last year, Bonnell was approached by MEDAES, a manufacturer of medical, architectural and engineered products, to develop a new medical rail system that was sleeker and more capable than competing models.

The system, which delivers medical gases to patients at their bedsides, previously had a gas coupler pointed downward, with a hose connected to the flow meter via a gas block. What MEDAES wanted was a new system without the block and hose, and a coupler that pointed forward rather than downward.

In addition, the company was eager to create a system with a strong, yet light, profile and extruded components that offer flexibility and a highly aesthetic appearance. Rather than incorporating features such as decorative panels to hide hoses, cables and other parts, MEDAES felt that the use of extruded modular components not only would simplify the system for users, but also would create a uniform look by eliminating the need for cumbersome extras.

At the outset of the project, MEDAES cooperated closely with Pittsburgh-based Bally Design to interview nurses, hospital administrators, maintenance people and architects to get a sense of what they felt current products lacked and what they thought a new product should offer. "We talked with people with different views of the product to find out what values were important to them. We figured if we can make all these people happy, we have a good product," emphasized Jerry Proctor, vice president of Bally Design. The end result was a horizontal headwall system that is high-tech but uncomplicated.

"As always, people wanted the best of both worlds. They wanted the coupler out in the front, but also the flexibility to turn the unit upside-down so that the couplers could point downwards, as in our old system. We ended up with a win-win situation," said John Kas-



▲ An extruded medical rail system offered cost-effective, flexible design.