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SENSOR OPERATION AND WHERE WILL IT END By Eric Martin

2020 and Covid-19 have seen some new initiatives on the market including touch free facilities.

One such new item is the Zip Hydrotap which can deliver chilled water, boiling water and sparkling water.

The design relies on a carefully designed motion sensor which only operates in a range from 15mm to 50mm from the tap. Direct contact with the tap will not operate it.

The safety mechanism for boiling water is a need to engage the side and rear beams which is easier for adults but not possible by a child.

This can be located above a sink or over a bench top drainer similar to existing lever operations.

This raises an interesting issue for people with disabilities. It would be much easier for someone that finds it difficult to turn taps or lever handles/buttons. Vision impaired would need to be trained in the same way as for current lever handle models.

It is certainly safer from Covid-19 direct transfer of potential germs/viruses and the like.

This new innovation is a positive contribution and initiative. The move to hands/touch free operation is also being considered for lifts. The details of how this would operate are not known but potentially is an issue for vision impaired users.

Many vision impaired people use touch as the main source of information particularly with the use of Braille. At present it is difficult to perceive that Braille will be replaced by another technology such as sensor operation and audible information.

However, this may lead to initiation of further research & development. However, with Covid-19 & transfer of germs/viruses by direct contact, especially if hand sanitisation does not occur for every action, it is a real risk for vision impaired and does need serious consideration.

What other innovations will evolve and if they will consider people with disabilities is something to look forward to with interest. It is hoped that Innovations such as the Zip Hydrotap, is just the beginning. It will be good if, like Zip, new designs consider how people with disabilities use facilities and this is an integral part of the innovation/design phase.

Yours faithfully

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