Reaping the Benefits: Reprocessing Medical Devices

What is medical device reprocessing?
Medical device reprocessing involves diverting used devices from recycling for use by that institution or by another. While this is mostly a technique used for minimally invasive disposables, some have started reprocessing surgical devices as well. Reprocessing can save on landfill costs and, for hospitals reusing devices, repurchasing costs.

Unnecessary Waste
- 30% Percentage of hospital waste originating from the operating room

Avoidable Costs
- $2B Potential annual savings to the U.S. health care system from reprocessing and repurchasing 2% of all medical devices
- 50% Potential cost savings from purchasing reprocessed medical devices instead of new devices
- $213K Annual savings by one health system from purchasing reprocessed medical devices

6 Steps for Reprocessing Medical Devices

1. Gain Clinician Buy-In
Reprocessing, and especially reusing, medical devices requires buy-in from physicians and clinicians. The idea of reprocessing is new to many caregivers, and some are uncomfortable with reprocessing devices. This initiative should come from clinicians, not be imposed on them.

2. Partner with a Vendor
While the vendor community is divided about the benefits of reprocessing devices, many product vendors and consultancies offer services to assist hospitals in reprocessing and reusing devices.

3. Assess Local Landfill Contracts
Understand the contract with local landfill vendors to understand how much of your spending is tied to disposal of potentially reusable devices.

4. Rightsize Product Usage
To cut down on operating room product waste, some hospitals have begun instituting policies that all non-essential devices be opened during procedures, rather than before. This helps to avoid contaminating devices if they are not used in a procedure.

5. Understand the Spectrum
There are numerous options when it comes to deciding what to reprocess and what to reuse. Many hospitals only reprocess devices present in the room with the patient, but not used. Others have sought to reuse surgical devices.

6. Be a Humanitarian
Many health care organizations have donated their devices to philanthropic organizations. Charities such as InterVol and Project C.U.R.E. reprocess devices and donate them to caregivers in the third world.

Currently, around 3,000 hospitals have reprocessing programs
Health Care Sustainability Initiative

Understanding the Impact of Reprocessing

Who Supports Hospitals in Reprocessing Devices Today?

**Medical Device Manufacturers**
Various companies sell pre-owned equipment and offer device reprocessing services. Products may be available for up to 50% off the cost of new devices.

**Association of Medical Device Reprocessors**
The AMDA is a trade group that offers hospitals educational resources about device reprocessing. The group also lobbies on behalf of firms with medical device reprocessing capabilities.

**Food and Drug Administration:**
The FDA issued major regulations protecting and endorsing the safety of reprocessed devices in 2013 and 2014. This has led many clinicians to increase their interest in reprocessing medical devices.

### Case in Brief: Unity Point Health
- Four-hospital system located in Des Moines, Iowa
- Leader in hospital sustainability
- Worked with Project C.U.R.E. (Commission on Urgent Relief and Equipment), a charity founded in 1987 to distribute medical equipment to the developing world
- Provided Project C.U.R.E. with many of its reprocessed devices, donating to causes such as the 2010 Haitian earthquake
- Donated 430,000 pounds of supplies in 2010, diverting these items from the waste stream
- Saved more than $213,000 by using reprocessed medical devices

**Stryker Sustainability Solutions**
works with hospitals that save over $1 million annually as a result of a reprocessing program

Who Is Thinking About Medical Device Reprocessing?

1. **Service Line Directors**
   Service line directors will likely captain the issue of reprocessing and will need to canvass physicians and ultimately approve of reprocessing for it to begin.

2. **Physicians and Clinicians**
   To begin medical device reprocessing, a hospital’s physicians and clinicians will need to agree on the specific devices and procedures that will be affected by reprocessing. This buy-in process is necessary to ensure sustainable success.

3. **Device Manufacturers**
   Depending on the device type, hospitals should consider working with their manufacturers to encourage more sustainable product usage. Many manufacturers have deep expertise in reprocessing and offer steep discounts for hospitals looking to use reprocessed devices.

---

2) It’s Easy Being Green for Iowa Health - Des Moines, <facilitymanagement.com/articles/green-2013-06-01.html>.

Have a sustainability tactic you want to share? Want to learn more about how the Advisory Board is serving our members’ sustainability needs? Email sustainability@advisory.com to speak with one of our experts.