Infection Prevention Increasing, Focusing On Safety

Infection control practices are getting tougher and even more crucial in today's hospital environment. As hospitals and other medical providers take notice, their purchasing priorities are changing—and shifting to devices that will enhance safety for their patients and staff.

A recent study by The Freedonia Group, Inc, a Cleveland-based industry research firm, says U.S. demand for infection prevention products and services will increase annually to $23.5 billion in 2013. This means hospitals are purchasing the necessary equipment to keep their hospitals—especially the OR—as infection-free as possible.

According to the study, the best growth opportunities are anticipated in safety-enhanced devices, including:

- IV and urinary catheters.
- Hypodermic syringes and needles.
- Blood collection sets.
- Surgical scalpels.
  These safety-enhanced devices help to reduce health care-acquired infections (HAIs), particularly in the form of accidental needlesticks. Researchers predict rapid expansion of this technology due to stricter OSHA standards aimed at preventing accidental needlesticks and extended health insurance coverage for urinary catheters.

  In October 2008, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid listed specific "never events" that hospitals would no longer be reimbursed for if they occurred. This list includes HAIs. In fact, the Center for Disease Control estimates 1.7 million HAIs and 99,000 associated deaths occur in the U.S. each year.

  What's more, the annual hospital cost per surgical site infection is $25,546 (2002 data), the CDC says. Central line associated bloodstream infections can cost a hospital an average of $36,441 per infection (2002). Clearly, HAIs are costly not only for patients, but for the hospital as a whole, as well as the surgeon and surgical staff associated with the infection. Even surgical safety scalpels, in which surgeons have historically been slow to adapt, are anticipated to grow as infection prevention and safety in the OR becomes increasingly monitored and tracked.

  Meanwhile, the study reports growth opportunities for other infection prevention products and services will vary widely by type. For example, demand for protective apparel and textiles, such as surgical drapes, gowns, medical and laboratory gloves, face masks and staff apparel, will advance at

a below average pace. This slower growth is due to trends toward less invasive patient procedures and limited pricing flexibility among these types of products, the researchers predict.

Overall, disinfectants consumed by health care and life science facilities will post demand of $3.0 billion in 2013, up 3.9 percent annually from 2008, the report states. This growth will benefit increased pressures on health care facilities to upgrade staff hygiene and facility disinfection practices to prevent HAIs such as MRSA, VRE and *C. diff*. Additionally, health care and life science markets for sterilization supplies, equipment and services will show favorable growth as medical providers adhere to stricter protocols to ensure the safety of new and reprocessed products.

In the end, the environment in and around the OR—and in the hospital as a whole—is changing. Guidelines for infection prevention are becoming stricter, and the consequences for a patient contracting an infection in the hospital are becoming more detrimental not just for the patient, but for the hospital, its doctors and staff. As a result, safety and infection prevention devices are becoming more and more crucial in the OR and beyond. It seems growth in infection control practices will continue as all health care professionals work to enhance care and safety for patients, regardless of the procedure.

Sources: TransWorldNews, CDC.gov

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