

Purchasing Perspectives: Surgical Gowns And Drapes

As purchasing professionals are faced increasing pressures to buy the lowest priced products, yet maintain high-quality, making the right purchasing choice for surgical gowns and drapes is especially important. These materials are crucial to maintaining infection control practices and keeping surgical patients and staff safe. So, *Surgical Products* asked manufacturers of these materials: What are the top three considerations surgical professionals should make when purchasing surgical gowns and drapes? Here is Michelle Fleming's, VP/General Manager of the OR Disposables Division of Spectrum Laboratories response that question.



1. Product quality and safety features. Patient safety and healthcare professional protection is paramount in the clinical setting. In these difficult economic times, many hospitals are now in the red and purchasing decision-makers are striving to source the lowest cost products. Sometimes, because the purchasing managers are somewhat removed from the OR setting and the clinical space, they don't always have the same features and needs in mind as those in the Operating Room using the products.

Surgical gowns and drapes help reduce risk of infectious disease transmission, while protecting clinicians and equipment. Maximizing safety and preventing sterilant damage to expensive and sensitive OR equipment helps improve patient outcomes, and optimize clinical performance. Therefore, product quality and safety features should be the primary consideration when purchasing surgical gowns and drapes, as purchasing the best products, at the best price, will optimally help improve your

bottom line.

2. Ease of use. If you look at the materials that are used, quality again goes back to getting the best products at the best price. The use of soft, anti-stat materials, and safety straps and tabs, for example, help the clinician more easily drape the patient and equipment, while lowering turnaround time between cases. That is another economic value for the facility.

3. Reliability of manufacturer and ease of purchasing process. It is important to ask:

- Can your drape manufacturer meet your lead time and capacity?
- Does your supplier have emergency shipment response?
- Are they easy to work with?
- Are they flexible enough to meet your unique needs?

Some manufacturers have the ability to create and customize products to meet clinical needs and applications. Someone in the OR may have a great idea for a product that helps get the job done more efficiently. However, they would then need to communicate that to the buyer, unless they themselves have purchasing authorization. Sometimes I come across a creative buyer who thinks beyond the brochures, but not very often. It would be great for purchasers to seek manufacturers capable of producing quality, custom-designed surgical drapes and gowns.

Cost is extremely important, but sourcing the best quality products that you can buy at the best value and best price, from a reputable, reliable manufacturer, will provide the best clinical outcomes and overall value for your facility.

Stay tuned for more tips related to purchasing surgical gowns and drapes, and check out the January/February 2010 issue of Surgical Products to view more responses.

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