Caring For Your Instruments

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How can surgical professionals ensure they maximize the use of their surgical instruments with proper care?

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As recently indicated in ST79:2006/A2:2009; “The written recommendations of the device manufacturer should always be followed. The reusable medical device manufacturer is responsible for ensuring that the device can be effectively cleaned and sterilized.”

As most already know, “cleaning” is the critical first step in reprocessing and decontaminating a surgical instrument after usage. Per IAHCSMM’s Central Service Technical Manual, “Failure to properly clean an instrument may permit foreign material (for example, soil organic material including microorganisms, and inorganic matter and lubricants) located outside and inside of the device to hinder the disinfection and/or sterilization processes.”

... If an instrument is not properly cleaned, it can never be properly disinfected or sterilized.

Cleaning surgical instruments can be achieved via a manual process of soaking in detergent, cannula flushing, thorough brushing and wiping instruments before disinfecting and sterilization, or this can be accomplished with the use of automated cleaning systems that combine repeating cycles of ultrasonic cleaning, automatic

flushing, washing with enzymic detergent and rinsing inside & out before disinfection and sterilization.

Understanding and practicing these basic concepts will not only help ensure the maximum lifespan of a surgical instrument, but will also help minimize the risk of cross contamination and infection from improperly cleaned surgical instruments within the healthcare environment.

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