Rebuilding To Recycle

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For Greg Wallace, the term ‘refurbished’ equipment that is often used in the medical industry should really be rephrased to ‘rebuilt.’

“Refurbished implies a museum-quality restoration,” says Wallace, the owner of H&S Medical, a company that services and rebuilds equipment such as surgical tables and sterilizers. “If you do that, it would cost more than the table would be worth. If you spend all your money trying to make everything look super shiny and better than new, then you’re not spending money on the substance. When push comes to shove, the thing that we are really concerned about is the quality of the equipment.”

No matter the terminology, more and more hospitals today are turning to rebuilding equipment as a way to ‘go green’ with their surgical equipment while also reducing costs. “It’s seen as a viable alternative to purchasing new,” Wallace says.

“New surgical tables are about $35,000, and we can rebuild it for a fraction of that.”

According to Wallace, cost savings on a rebuilt surgical table, for example, can be as much as 75 percent. Furthermore, rebuilt tables are often sent back out to the field with a useful service life similar to when it was new – 7 to 10 years – so nearly doubling the life of the table.

According to Scott Patneaude, Director of Sales for ACE Medical Equipment, Inc., a company that refurbishes hospital/surgical equipment, refurbishing/rebuilding equipment makes even more sense for items in which not much major technological advancement has been made in recent years. Items such as stretchers and tables, for example, can be used for years, even as procedures advance and care practices change.

In terms of environmental savings, rebuilt/refurbished equipment means recycling equipment to reduce waste. Wallace says that approximately 75 percent of a surgical table is recycled when it is rebuilt. By reusing components of the existing table, it also helps prevent hazardous materials, such as carcinogens, from being put into the atmosphere.

“We reuse those parts without spewing nasty material into the atmosphere in the machine shop, or purchasing it from somebody who has,” Wallace says. “The parts that get replaced are parts that wear out.”

In the end, Patneaude offers, the cost-savings associated with utilizing refurbished or rebuilt equipment makes going green in the hospital “realistic.”

Going green is the right thing to do, but hospitals also have their bottom lines to

worry about. Refurbished/rebuilt equipment, it seems, may offer a solution for hospitals to realize environmental benefits – while also saving some money.

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