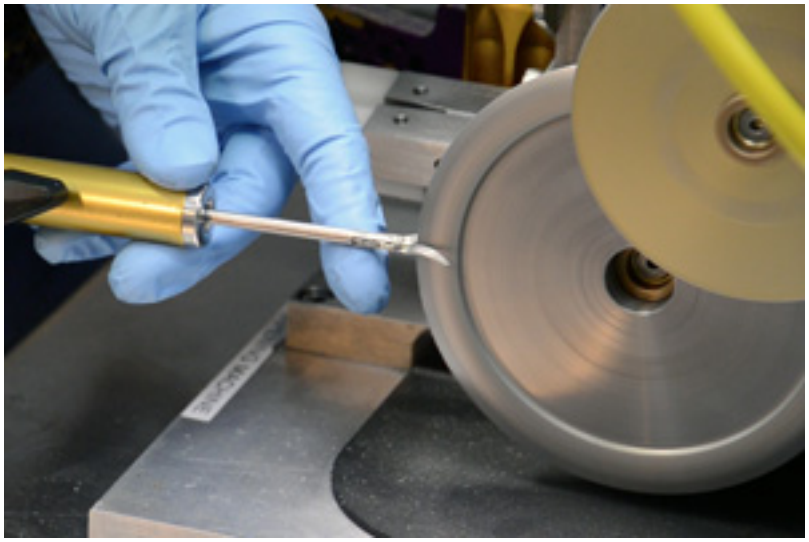
Optimize Your Reprocessing Program For Better Results

Brian White, President, Stryker Sustainability Solutions

This article appeared in the April issue of Surgical Products.



Over the past two decades, reprocessing has transitioned from an emerging trend in healthcare to a widely regarded, increasingly standard practice in hospitals across the nation. In the future, the prevalence of reprocessing programs will continue to grow. More hospitals will implement—and refine—programs of their own to reduce costs and reallocate funds to support quality of care initiatives. Many of the best hospitals in the country reprocess, including the majority of the U.S. News & WorldReport “Honor Roll Hospitals,” and have realized significant savings as a result.

Reprocessing has gained popularity as a preeminent sustainability initiative for numerous reasons. First and foremost, there is a high level of confidence in the safety and efficacy of reprocessed single-use devices (SUDs). They undergo a rigorous process of testing and inspection to ensure substantially equivalent performance to the original device, while adhering to FDA regulated manufacturing process controls. Second, a reprocessing program can provide significant cost-savings that enable healthcare institutions to stretch limited financial resources. Supply cost savings from reprocessing allows hospital administrators to redirect funds toward initiatives that could improve patient care, such as hiring healthcare providers or purchasing new technologies that improve clinical outcomes.

At this point, healthcare leaders cannot afford to ignore the benefits that are a direct result of reprocessing. Hospitals that do not reprocess could be missing an opportunity to achieve substantial savings. While overall savings is greatly dependent on the size of the hospital, level of engagement, program participation,

and executive support, the use of reprocessed products typically saves hospitals 40-50 percent per device. Stryker Sustainability Solutions works with hospitals that save over $1 million annually as a result of a reprocessing program.

To yield the greatest savings, hospitals must optimize their reprocessing programs to ensure that everyone involved understands their role in its success. Hospitals that already reprocess may also have the opportunity to increase device savings by expanding the program to new areas or increasing program participation in areas that already reprocess.

It’s important to invest the time and effort to qualify a reprocessor that will maximize the financial benefit for the hospital while minimizing disruptions to the supply chain and clinical practices. The best reprocessors demonstrate a commitment to developing and maintaining strong relationships with each person involved in the program. It’s important to find a reprocessor that:

• Understands that patient safety is—and will always be—the top priority.
• Strives to support the operational goals of each healthcare organization.
• Collaborates with each department to identify and enhance overall sustainability efforts.
• Facilitates a smooth implementation of the program and maintains a constant presence to ensure the program is running optimally.
• Helps maximize the program savings so that resources can be redirected to important quality care initiatives.

Integrating a reprocessing program into a hospital’s existing operations can be a challenge. A well-supported program by all staff is directly correlated with the level of bottom-line savings achieved. This means that a hospital’s key decision-makers must fully support the program. An effective reprocessor can help alleviate that pressure by taking proactive steps to design a customized program that will work for each hospital and will ensure a seamless implementation.

Reprocessors should provide a system that requires minimal effort for collecting devices after their use. This method should require minimal extra work from clinical staff and shouldn’t distract them from the staff’s primary responsibility—caring for patients. Some reprocessors utilize cutting-edge supply chain systems such as GHX to fit into existing supply, storage and usage patterns. Advanced technology is also utilized to simplify the purchasing process through flexible online inventory systems that eliminate some element of human error.

Part of a reprocessor’s commitment to each hospital involves providing ample resources to assist with driving program participation. Program participation ultimately determines the value of a reprocessing initiative. Having a highly engaged staff is critical to maximizing savings results.

Reprocessors that actively promote their program and its benefits inside the hospital to clinical and administrative personnel are more likely to maximize savings within a hospital. This includes displaying program promotional material in high traffic areas that increase awareness and clearly communicate results. An effective

reprocessor is not just a service provider – they help drive the program's success throughregular in-services with clinical staff and business reviews with administrative personnel.

Clinical education and program management are the keys to achieving year-over-year savings objectives.
The final, critical element of a reprocessing program is effective representation from the vendor. The ideal representatives should act as consultants. They should educate staff on the proper collection of used medical devices, ensuring that these valuable assets are never thrown away. The representatives should also provide educational tools, including literature and instructional videos as resources for staff.

The best reprocessing representatives work with supply chain personnel and clinical leaders to increase the usage of reprocessed devices and enhance the impact of such key sustainability programs.

Finding a third-party reprocessor is easy. However, conduct due diligence to determine the actual capabilities of the reprocessor to maximize savings. Ask for case studies that showcase other hospitals' results and how they achieved them.

You can maximize results by working with a reprocessor that helps you throughout the lifecycle of the program—not just initial implementation—and ensures everyone is dedicated to its success.

Source URL (retrieved on *09/16/2014 - 7:16pm*):
http://www.surgicalproductsmag.com/articles/2013/04/optimize-your-reprocessing-program-better-results?qt-most_popular=0&qt-recent_blogs_articles=0