Creating a Partnership for Quality and Care

As medical advancements over the past century and even over the past few years have drastically improved the safety, efficiency and effectiveness of nearly every facet of surgery, so too have they greatly enlarged and expanded the surgeon's tool arsenal. Surgical instrumentation, diagnostic equipment, imaging systems and a vast array of other OR devices have changed the way modern surgery is performed, providing numerous benefits to both the surgeons and patients alike. Precision surgical equipment can streamline procedures, improve surgeon visibility and access to the surgical site and can even lead to better patient outcomes.

Unfortunately, this all too valuable precision surgical equipment can often be very expensive. After all, the surgical instruments and devices required to meet the stringent requirements of advancing medical technology often incorporate new, state-of-the-art technologies of their own; and the development and manufacturing of those technologies can be a costly enterprise.

For medical facilities committed to keeping current with advancing medical techniques and surgical procedures, equipping their ORs with the latest surgical instruments and equipment is an expensive necessity. These often heavy expenditures, though, are also an investment. If the new medical equipment acquired can improve patient care, decrease procedure and turnaround time and allow the hospital to treat even more patients, then that investment may prove to be well worth the initial expense. Of course, a very important part of reaping the rewards is protecting the investment itself.

As with any tool, surgical instruments and medical devices are subject to wear and tear during the course of normal use. And the more delicate or precise a piece of equipment is, the more it may degrade over time. Naturally, the cost of constantly replacing aging and overused equipment would be prohibitive or even ruinous. A much more reasonable approach to maintaining instrument and equipment quality, and protecting a facility’s investment, is to have deteriorating equipment repaired.

Fortunately, most medical device manufacturers offer maintenance and repair services for their own products. However, for larger hospitals and surgical facilities that utilize an extensive array of equipment from a variety of manufacturers, an independent repair company may be a more convenient and economical choice. These companies specialize in the repair and refurbishment of a broad range of surgical instruments and medical devices, often from any and all manufacturers. They can provide a one-stop option for instrument repair and many of them offer both in-house and mail-in repair service. And there are a number of reputable repair companies to choose from. (See adjacent sidelines.)

The choice of a repair company is not a decision to be taken lightly, of course, and there are a few things that a hospital or medical center should consider when making that choice. While convenience and keeping down costs are undoubtedly

important, so is the quality of the work the repair company is providing. After all, if the repairs are shoddy or an instrument is unavailable for an extended period of time while being repaired, the savings of a few dollars would hardly be worth it.

That being the case, it is important for hospitals to be sure that they are choosing a reputable repair company. They should be looking for a company that is well established and has a respectable history in the industry. Companies with a proven track record are more likely to have a commitment to quality backed up by solid quality control guidelines. They will also be more apt to provide guarantees and warrantees on the work they provide.

Another important consideration to take into account is whether the repair company can meet all of the hospital or medical centers equipment needs. By insuring that a repair company is knowledgeable and experienced in repairing not just surgical instrumentation but precision equipment, scopes, fiberoptic equipment, etc., hospitals can get all they need in one place. This ensures easier instrument tracking and accountability and may enable the hospital to keep down cost by bundling services.

Turnaround time on damaged instruments is also a very important concern, as being ill equipped can be seriously detrimental to continuing a smooth workflow. A number of repair companies have multiple repair centers throughout the country or offer onsite repair services that can have many surgical instruments back into circulation in 24 to 48 hours. More complex equipment, though, often requires offsite repair and can take longer. In the event that an important piece of equipment is going to be out of service for a longer period of time, it is helpful to have a repair company that provides loaner equipment that can keep the hospital up and running until their own equipment is repaired.

Hospitals should also look into what they are getting from their repair company beyond just the repair service. Many companies, once under contract, will provide preventative maintenance services, staff training on instrument care and help in procuring new or refurbished equipment should replacement be necessary. These value added services can stand to save hospitals even more money in the long run.

Basically, among the most important thing a hospital or surgical center should keep in mind when looking for an equipment repair company is that the company they choose should be willing to work with them, not simply for them. The hospital and repair company should essentially be a partnership, both equally concerned with keeping the facility running smoothly and ensuring that each surgeon has the best quality instrumentation and equipment to provide the best quality patient care.

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