Defining Success

Amanda Hankel, editor

As the last of 2010, I'd say the November/December issue of *Surgical Products* is quite an exciting one. In this issue, we announce the winners of the second annual Excellence in Surgical Products Awards and the first annual Surgeons of the Year Award. As I put the issue together, it got me questioning: What defines success? In the case of these awards, what makes a product or a clinician successful, or worthy of an award in the surgical industry?

Take for example, the winning products of this year's ESP Awards, Healthmark Industries Co.'s Test Object Surgical Instrument (TOSI™). You can read all about it in a Q&A article in the November/December issue, but this tiny device that tests surgical instrument washers may not seem that impressive from an outsider's perspective. Yet, it clearly makes such an impact amongst the surgical industry that it was the top voter-getter of this year's ESP Awards.

In learning about the TOSI product, I interviewed Cheron Rojo, Sterile Processing Department Educator at Children's Hospital Central California, an end-user who had nominated the product for the ESP Awards based on his experience using it. He says he was drawn to the device because the product's slogan, "If it's not clean, it's not sterile," resonated with him. It made sense, he says, to test instrument washers to make sure they're working, and so he decided to give the product a try. Immediately, the product helped his facility diagnose multiple issues with their own washers that could have been compromising the cleanliness of the instruments – and putting patients and staff at risk. Since then, his facility uses the product every day, and he uses it when he conducts audits of other facilities to ensure their washers are up-to-par.

You can read more of Rojo's account on using the TOSI in an exclusive Q&A interview soon to appear on *First Cuts*, but I thought I would share an interesting part of our conversation. At the end of the interview, Rojo asked me, "So, you're telling me out of all the products on that [ESP nominee] list, that [the TOSI] won … out of all of them?" "Yes," I answered. "Wow …," he said, "because you had some really cool stuff on there."

I think the ESP results just go to show that when it comes to a surgical product, it comes down to the impact it has on a facility. Does it meet their needs? Does it improve patient care, efficiency and safety? A product can be ultra-innovative, but if it can't make a difference for surgeons and staff – say, it's too expensive, or it's too difficult to learn how to use – then its impact won't be felt.

Clearly, the TOSI makes a difference for surgical facilities, and its impact was felt in the way surgical professionals voted for the 2010 ESP Awards. As for a definition of success? At least in the surgical world, maybe that's just it – impact. If a product, or a surgeon for that matter, makes an impact in their facility, whether it's pioneering new procedures or improving efficiency, infection control or patient and staff safety, the product or the surgeon is making a difference. And that, I would argue, is a success.

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