Instrument Maintenance

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Q: How has instrument maintenance changed in the past few years?

A: In the past, it was very difficult -- if not impossible -- to understand the full circle of instrument utilization, including the number of sets in inventory, how often they had been used in the OR, were the correct manufacturer's instructions available for the technicians when processing instruments, when was the last time any of the instruments or sets had been repaired, who had touched the sets during processing and where they had traveled before being used on a patient. If any type of report existed in the past, it probably was a static report that documented when a set was purchased.

This static report was great for anything purchased, but didn't report out the eventual use of the new tray – did the hospital recoup its investment and was it being cared for as the manufacturer had described?

Now with instrument management systems, the full depth and breadth of instrument management can be discovered through the creative use of this type of software. And the pivotal data point is utilization, which is so important for the CPD manager. The instrument management system can validate that purchases made were indeed utilized (or not utilized!) as predicted at the time of purchase. The CPD manager now has a complete view of utilization for everything that is a part of the

department: trays and individual instruments in inventory, equipment used to process the trays and the employees who managed the process. Trays and individual instruments can now be scheduled for inspection and repair by utilization not by an arbitrary date in time, which was the only way to manage tray repairs in the past.

Q: What would you say are the biggest mistakes healthcare organizations continue to make when it comes to their instruments and the way they are maintained?

A: Past practice was to manage a department by “gut” and past experiences. For experienced managers, this usually worked. As hospitals ask managers to take on areas they may not have familiarity with, it is important to have data to help them quickly learn the important throughputs of the area. The systems need to be easy to learn to use – intuitive – and is easy for the individual employees to enter data while performing their duties. Hospitals are tasked with buying IT systems every year, and the CPD systems are as important as those in caregiving areas. Any delay in moving to an instrument management system will continue to hamper the hospital’s and CPD manager’s best efforts in understanding their business and failing to make permanent positive changes. Data is the only sure way to diagnose problems and monitor the methods used to correct dysfunctional processes. It is too difficult to collect data in a manual way and manual methods are usually static – a snapshot in time. There is no better way to collect report and analyze data than by a system.

Q: How does CareFusion help extend the life and quality of their instrumentation?

A: CareFusion also has an instrument management system offered by the world-class V. Mueller brand call the IMPRESS system. IMPRESS is a robust instrument management system that is real-time, connected to a web-based server and has the capability to collect data at any point in the instrument pathway to best understand instrument utilization and process steps used to manage instruments in their CPD and OR. While the system itself is impressive, V. Mueller has invested in a team of implementation managers and sales specialists. This team ensures the initial implementation is seamless to the department’s operations, and then periodically checks with the CPD manager and key users to ensure the system is best utilized to meet the customer’s needs.

Quick tips for improved instrument management:

- **Educate…and then educate some more!** CPD is a complicated department: complex instruments and instrument sets, equipment and chemicals to clean and process instruments, a physical environment that can be challenging to work within and external regulatory agencies that are monitoring the department's processes. Education is the key step to ensure employees are appropriately equipped to perform the job.

- **Invest in an instrument management system.** It is just not possible to know everything that occurs in the complex departments a manager may need to manage in today's hospital environments. IT systems are an essential tool for a manager to be able to manage departments and continually drive process improvements so essential in today's climate of "doing more with less."

- **Streamline processes and eliminate waste.** Educated staff who understand and practice to standards and having an instrument management system will allow the manager to effectively change processes to "do more with less".

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