Benefits
Reprocessing single-use devices (SUDs) allows Dignity Health to better utilize limited resources. In FY2013, Dignity Health saved over $8 million and eliminated more than 271,000 pounds of medical waste by reprocessing SUDs. Over the last four years, Dignity Health has saved more than $27 million and eliminated more than 872,000 pounds of medical waste from our nation’s landfills.

Challenge
Rising costs and shrinking reimbursements have presented a challenge not only to Dignity Health, but to the healthcare industry as a whole – one of the largest contributors to landfill waste in the United States. Hospitals and healthcare networks across the nation are pursuing initiatives to reduce their environmental impact. To implement a successful reprocessing program, it is critical that all staff members – including surgeons – are educated about the benefits, science, safety, and technology of reprocessing.

Strategy
Reprocessing single-use devices is an environmental practice that not only radically reduces medical waste, but also reduces the supply costs for Dignity Health hospitals – all without capital investment. By maximizing both the collections and purchases of reprocessed devices, we have implemented a mandatory reprocessing program that enables our health system to continue delivering the highest quality patient care.

Implementation Process
The Supply Chain Management team launched Dignity Health’s reprocessing program in 1997. In its first year the health system saved $136,000 across 15 hospitals. To improve on these results, Dignity Health implemented the following processes:

- Clinical contract administrators facilitated the purchasing, collections, and use of reprocessed devices.
- Physicians were educated about the benefits of reprocessing, including the fact that reprocessed SUDs are functionally equivalent to new devices.
- Reprocessing representatives were constantly on-site at system facilities to educate staff on best practices.
- Monthly compliance reports were developed to communicate savings achievements and goals, while facility specific action plans were created to improve results. Corporate and hospital executives provided support and sponsorship essential to the effort’s success.
- Staff and hospital administration thwarted attempts by original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) to disrupt the reprocessing programs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Reprocessing Spend</th>
<th>Cost Avoidance</th>
<th>Waste Avoidance (lbs)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FY 2010</td>
<td>$4,121,192</td>
<td>$5,437,495</td>
<td>162,650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 2011</td>
<td>$4,244,643</td>
<td>$5,376,690</td>
<td>198,080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 2012</td>
<td>$6,923,436</td>
<td>$8,357,382</td>
<td>240,709</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FY 2013</td>
<td>$7,313,625</td>
<td>$8,014,391</td>
<td>271,494</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$22,602,896</td>
<td>$27,185,958</td>
<td>872,933</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lessons Learned

Initially, some physicians were reluctant to utilize reprocessed devices. Very early in the process, we recognized the importance of soliciting physician champions to communicate accurate information throughout the clinical environment, and to encourage colleagues to use reprocessed devices. Providing the facts about quality regulations and liability, including tours of the reprocessing plant and meeting with product specialists was helpful in combating clinical resistance. It’s critical that any OEM attempts to interfere with the reprocessing program are addressed immediately. Counter-detailing efforts need to be communicated to the executive sponsor and addressed locally. A successful reprocessing program requires commitment from all staff members - when staff believe they are helping their hospital and being stewards for the environment, they are more willing to assist. Additionally, collaboration with our reprocessing partner has been crucial to the success of our program. Their consistent presence in our hospitals along with ongoing clinical support and education has allowed Dignity Health to develop a world-class reprocessing program. Last year, our system reprocessed 71% of all devices across all eligible product categories.

Demographic information

Dignity Health, one of the nation’s five largest health care systems, is a 17-state network of 10,000 physicians and 56,000 employees who provide patient-centered care at more than 300 care centers, including 39 acute care hospitals, urgent and occupational care, imaging centers, home health, and primary care clinics. Headquartered in San Francisco, Dignity Health is dedicated to providing compassionate, high-quality and affordable patient-centered care with special attention to the poor and underserved. In 2012, Dignity Health provided $1.6 billion in charitable care and services.

Supply and Service Resource Management

Contact Name: Dawn Smith, Administrator, Surgical Services
Email: dawn.smith3@dignityhealth.org
Phone: 602.307.2895
Keywords/Topics: environmentally preferable purchasing, waste prevention, reuse, recycling, red bag waste, Regulated Medical Waste Reduction, cost savings