

May 2009

The self-study lesson on this central service topic was developed by STERIS. The lessons are administered by KSR Publishing, Inc.

Earn CEUs

The series can assist readers in maintaining their CS certification. After careful study of the lesson, complete the examination at the end of this section. Mail the complete examination and scoring fee to *Healthcare Purchasing News* for grading. We will notify you if you have a passing score of 70 percent or higher, and you will receive a certificate of completion within 30 days. Previous lessons are available on the Internet at www.hponline.com.

Certification

The CBSPD (Certification Board for Sterile Processing and Distribution) has pre-approved this in-service for one (1) contact hour for a period of five (5) years from the date of original publication. Successful completion of the lesson and post test must be documented by facility management and those records maintained by the individual until re-certification is required. **DO NOT SEND LESSON OR TEST TO CBSPD.**

For additional information regarding certification contact CBSPD - 148 Main Street, Suite B-1, Lebanon, NJ 08833 (www.sterileprocessing.org). For more information direct any questions to *Healthcare Purchasing News* (941) 927-9345, ext 202.

Learning Objectives

1. Describe the key areas of the sterile processing department to focus on.
2. Discuss the steps to follow in order to lead the team effectively.
3. Explain which industry and professional guidelines can be used to develop policies and procedures for your SPD.
4. Evaluate the department's process workflow.

Sponsored by:



STERIS®

SELF-STUDY SERIES

Sponsored by STERIS®

Survive and thrive: Guide for new SPD managers

by M. Chris King, RN, CRCST

As healthcare providers are realizing, the sterile processing department (SPD) is the backbone of hospital functions; providing sterile instruments, supplies and equipment to many areas within the hospital and, in many facilities, to outside clinics as well. Because of the risks related to potential contamination and infection, there are national standards that guide the department's functions, and specific SPD protocols and procedures are developed from these standards. It's a complex environment and there's a lot to know. If SPD professionals don't follow their policies and procedures strictly, patients can suffer.

A lot to know

It can be a daunting task to manage the SPD when you know it well. It can be downright scary to manage a department that you have no familiarity with. SPDs often fall under the management of surgical services. The managers tend to be OR technicians or nurses with no previous experience in sterile processing. Even if the new manager has previous experience as a sterile processing technician, he or she may not be trained to look at the department as a whole and know how to manage the entire process.

In order to lead the team effectively, improve productivity and develop thorough solutions to problems, it's vitally important for a new manager in sterile processing to get to know the staff, the customers and the actual physical space of the department. This also includes having a thorough knowledge of automated equipment, chemistries and packaging materials.

Take it a step at a time

1. In the first few months, a new manager should focus on getting to know the staff.

- **Education:** find out everyone's educational background, who is certified and who is working toward that goal. In today's fast-paced and ever-changing SPD, sterile processing employees need

to keep pace with all of the emerging medical technologies.

Education is vital in this field. There are a number of certification and continuing education programs offered. Learn what is available and make sure each employee has access to these educational programs and is encouraged to continue his or her education. The emphasis on education is management's responsibility and is becoming more important as healthcare organizations become more complex and competitive.

- **Motivation:** One of the most critical requirements of a well-run department is a highly motivated staff. SPD staff must be productive while they also help conserve resources and minimize department expenses. Most importantly, they need to always have patient safety and welfare in mind during every task they perform. For these reasons, it's important to find out which employees are highly motivated to do their best work and are willing to embrace change. SPDs do not need technicians who are unwilling to change their processes "because that's the way they've always been done" and who resist learning new things. Patients' lives are depending on them, so there's no room for an employee who takes short cuts or who is unwilling to give 100% each and every day they come to work.

2. It's also important to get to know the department's customers.

- **Relationship-building:** The surgical department is the main customer of sterile processing departments. What's most important to perioperative customers is that their instruments and sets are sterile and complete, and are delivered on time. If this can be accomplished, the surgical schedule will not be disrupted. SPD managers should establish and maintain a good working relationship with their perioperative colleagues so that they can open communication channels and get

good information about what is working and what is not.

- **Building trust and taking responsibility:** The OR and SPD are interdependent for their mutual success. There must be trust and accountability on both sides of the relationship, and this must be encouraged by management. For example, in order to assure fast turnaround, OR management needs to make sure that soiled instruments are transported to the sterile processing department as soon as surgical procedures are completed. Also, since instruments with dried blood on them will take much longer to clean, surgical management needs to assure that soiled instruments are covered with a wet towel or sprayed with an instrument soaking solution before transport. The OR staff also needs to send complete instrument sets back to SPD, since the sterile processing staff will not be able to complete the sets in a timely manner if any instruments are left in the OR.
- **Ongoing communication:** Regular communication between the OR and SPD is vital. OR staff needs to let the sterile processing staff know what is needed each day and when it is needed, so that the SPD can prioritize what needs to get done first. In turn, SPD staff needs to let the OR know when they're having problems like a broken washer or sterilizer, or when maintenance is scheduled that requires equipment downtime. These issues can temporarily slow down sterile processing functions.

3. A new manager also needs to become familiar with the actual physical space of the department.

The manager should study each area of the sterile processing department and learn what mechanical equipment, chemistries and packaging materials are being used. Safety should be a primary concern. The staff needs to be able to use all the machines, chemicals, packaging and PPE correctly so that they remain safe, the expensive instruments remain safe, and most importantly, the patients on whom the instruments will be used remain safe.

- **Manual cleaning area:** There are many questions to ask. For example, what kind of enzymes, detergents and disinfectants are used? Are the chemistries effective for and compatible with the materials being washed? Is the staff knowledgeable about

the correct dilutions and have they read all of the labels to make sure the chemicals are being used correctly? Do they know where all of the MSDS information is kept and do they know what procedures to follow if a spill should occur? Is the staff wearing full PPE to protect themselves? It is management's job to provide the correct PPE but it's the responsibility of each staff member to wear the equipment and make sure it fits properly.

A. Decontamination area: In the decontam area, take inventory on what kinds of automated washers are used. Are they high or low-impingement systems? How do they operate and is everyone familiar with what to do if a washer breaks down? Does the hospital biomed department take care of them or is there a service contract with the manufacturer? What is the actual downtime of each machine and how does that affect productivity? What kinds of chemistries are used in the washers? Are they appropriate for and compatible with all of the different instruments, containers and utensils that are being put through the washers?

B. Prep and pack area: managers need to familiarize themselves with all the sterilizers in the department, including low and high-temperature sterilizers. Learn how they work, which sterilants are used, and if there are safety precautions associated with the sterilant. Does everyone know who to call when a sterilizer breaks down? What alternatives are available? For example, have some items always been sterilized using ETO when they could very well be steam sterilized? Learn the maintenance history of each machine and how it has impacted productivity.

4. Managers should take stock of what types of packaging and sterility assurance materials the department uses and how they are being maintained.

For example, are rigid containers used and if so, do they require special care? Are the container filters disposable or reusable, and how often are the container seals checked or replaced? Also, there are optimal weight recommendations provided by container manufacturers. Check the weight of each set that's packed in a container for processing: does it adhere to the manufacturer's recommendations? If wrap ma-

terial is used, is it used correctly? Is the appropriate size used for each set being wrapped? If peel pouches are used, are they being used correctly (no peel pouches should go inside sets, and if double-pouching is done the inner pouch should not be folded and must fit inside the outer pouch comfortably without a lot of excess air). In addition, the new manager must know what kind of physical, chemical and biological monitoring is being performed in the department. He or she must also confirm that sterility assurance data and other vital information are being captured and appropriate recordkeeping is being done for Joint Commission and other auditing.

After the basics, dig deeper

The basic steps outlined above already illustrate how much there is to know about any SPD. However, once new managers are comfortable with their staffs and have a good basic understanding of the equipment, chemistries, packaging materials and recordkeeping being used in their departments, they can take a deeper dive into the details. This is an opportunity to help the department shine.

Regulatory guidelines

Every manager should be familiar with the guidelines published by the Association for the Advancement of Medical Instrumentation (AAMI), the Association of periOperative Registered Nurses (AORN) and the International Association of Healthcare Central Service Materiel Management (IAHCSCMM). Review your department's policies and procedures and assess whether they represent best practices and also make sense for your department and the rest of the facility. In addition, managers need to know what past Joint Commission surveys have found and whether there are any outstanding items that need to be addressed. Finally, managers need to investigate what procedures OSHA, FDA and EPA require of their departments.

Process workflow

Most departments would benefit from a review of their workflow patterns. Identifying things that could be done more efficiently can lead to time and effort savings for staff. Managers should ask whether a task that now takes five steps can be accomplished in

See **SELF-STUDY** on page 26

SELF-STUDY from page 25

three steps by streamlining the process. Typical process improvement questions include:

- Is there a quality improvement plan in place?
- Do you have enough equipment to keep the flow in the department moving?
- Are there bottlenecks and where and when do they occur?
- Does the staff schedule meet processing demand around the clock?

Process improvement also requires that all staff be well trained on all the devices that come through the department and be well-versed in the department's policies and procedures. Additional details to investigate include:

- Are the department's policies and procedures easy to understand and does the staff know them and follow them?

- What kind of continuing education is being provided? Does the hospital compensate sterile processing professionals who have received and maintained their certification?

- Don't forget about manager education. Are you certified in sterile processing? It is important for your staff to know that whatever you require of them you also require of yourself.

Managers who have asked all these questions and addressed the issues that they discover as a result will be well on their way to having a dynamic SPD that can function efficiently, economically and safely. The resulting sterile processing operation will benefit the hospital's bottom line in two ways: it will be a cost-effective department to operate, and will help optimize patient outcomes. **HPN**

Chris King is a clinical education specialist representing STERIS Corporation. Her areas of responsibility include education, clinical support, troubleshooting, and issues concerning infection control, instrument reprocessing and sterilization. She has been the manager of a sterile processing department and has managed renovation and building projects including the major remodeling of an SPD. She has over 25 years of experience as a perioperative nurse working in operating rooms across the country. Her experience also includes nursing management roles in orthopedics, same-day surgery, and general and plastic surgery.

King has an Associate Degree in Nursing from Milwaukee Area Technical College and holds a certification from Purdue University in Central Processing. She is a 29-year member of AORN, a member of IAHCSSM, SGNA, and APIC.

CHECKLIST FOR A NEW SPD MANAGER

Area	Assessment Items	Comments
Staff Assessment	<input type="checkbox"/> Identify certified professionals and those in training.	Learn everyone's background and education.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Identify the change embracers.	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Identify the change resisters.	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Identify process/rule followers.	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Identify true leaders.	
SPD Customer Assessment	<input type="checkbox"/> Relationships established.	OR management: what is working, what is not.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Communication channels established between departments.	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Identify processes on both sides to achieve sterile, complete, and on-time delivery of instrumentation and supplies.	
SPD Space and Process: Decontamination	<input type="checkbox"/> Determine who maintains the equipment, how much downtime there is, and the effect on productivity.	Assess washers and their condition.
	<input type="checkbox"/> Assess appropriateness of chemistries in use for automated and manually washed items.	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Assess whether the staff uses the cleaning products safely and effectively.	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Assure that MSDS material is readily available and staff knows procedure in case of spills.	
	<input type="checkbox"/> PPE. Everyone wearing correctly and every time decontamination activities take place.	
SPD Space and Process: Prep & Pack	<input type="checkbox"/> Who maintains the sterilizers and what is downtime? How does it affect productivity?	Know the sterilizers and how they work. What type of sterilant is used and are there any particular safety measures that need to be adhered to?
	<input type="checkbox"/> Know the different packaging methods and materials. Are they being used according to manufacturer's instructions?	
	<input type="checkbox"/> What kind of physical, chemical and biological monitoring is being done?	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Is appropriate record-keeping done and vital information captured?	

Survive and thrive: Guide for new SPD managers

Circle the one correct answer:

1. New managers of sterile processing departments are always well versed in all aspects of the decontamination and sterilization process.
 - a. True
 - b. False
2. In the first few months, a new manager should focus on which of the following?
 - a. Regulatory guidelines
 - b. Process work flow
 - c. Getting to know the SPD staff
 - d. How to effectively cut costs
3. Which of the following is important when getting to know the staff in the SPD?
 - a. Educational background
 - b. Family issues
 - c. Staff motivation
 - d. a & c
4. Which of the following are the primary customers of the SPD?
 - a. Hospital clinics
 - b. Physicians
 - c. Emergency rooms
 - d. Operating rooms
 - e. a, c, & d
5. When dealing with the operating room it is essential to:
 - a. Build trust between the two departments
 - b. Communicate with the O.R. staff when things are not working
 - c. Take responsibility for the work being done or not getting done.
 - d. All of the above
6. A new manager should rely mainly on building services to know how all of the equipment in the department operates.
 - a. True
 - b. False
7. New managers should familiarize themselves with the types of packaging materials used in the department as well as which ones are appropriate for each type of sterilization method.
 - a. True
 - b. False
8. It is the responsibility of the sterilizer manufacturer to choose the sterility assurance products that are used in the department.
 - a. True
 - b. False
9. Which of the following regulatory agencies should the sterile processing department look towards for guidance?
 - a. OSHA
 - b. AAMI
 - c. AORN
 - d. FDA
 - e. All of the above
10. Which of the following is not related to process improvement?
 - a. Policies & procedures
 - b. Quality improvement plans
 - c. Vacation time
 - d. Continuing education

Sponsored by



Presented by



Request for Scoring

- I have enclosed the scoring fee of \$10. (*Payable to KSR Publishing, Inc. We regret that no refunds can be given. Multiple submissions may be paid with a single check.*)

Detach exam and return to:

Continuing Education Division
 KSR Publishing, Inc.
 2477 Stickney Point Road, Suite 315B
 Sarasota, FL 34231
 PH: 941-927-9345 Fax: 941-927-9588

Please print or type. Return this page only.

Name	
Title	
Hospital Name	
Mailing Address	
Apt/Suite	
City, State, Zip	
Daytime Phone	
E-mail	