

# 2006 CS/SPD Salary Survey sheds positive light on driven staffers

by Julie Williamson

Central service professionals, get ready for some good news. After years of flirting with the \$50,000 mark, the average CS employee's annual salary has finally made its way to that seemingly elusive threshold. Well, almost.

Results from *Healthcare Purchasing News' 2006 Central Service/SPD Salary Survey* revealed that across all titles the average salary climbed to a respectable \$49,838, up \$1,494 over 2005 figures. Another plus is that more than 80 percent of respondents' current wages represent an increase over their 2005 base salary.

As with any survey, it's important to note that respondent variations – from job title, tenure and facility location, among other factors – account for some degree of rising or falling figures. This year's survey garnered responses from two higher-level professionals: an individual in a CS manager/material manager hybrid role and an administrator, both of whom reported lofty salaries of \$92,500 and \$72,500, respectively. Although these higher-paid respondents helped nudge the salary figures North a bit, that doesn't diminish the fact that overall salary results for those in other roles were also brag-worthy.

Salaries for CS directors, which accounted for 12 percent of respondents, came in at \$68,026, up from \$64,868 in 2005, while CS managers, whom represented 46 percent of respondents, came in \$55,278 (up \$1,200 from 2005 figures). Although only 12 percent of respondents belonged to the CS technician group, compared to last year's 18 percent, these employees went from \$32,500 in 2005 to a current \$33,289. The only respondents reporting less pay for 2006 were CS supervisors, whose \$39,620 average annual salary translated into a \$3,832 drop over 2005 totals.

## Being proactive pays

So what's driving the apparent salary surge trend? Some believe that both mounting responsibilities and administrative awareness on the

SPD's impact on healthcare could – or at least should – be playing a role.

"Those working in CS today are having to stay on top of so many more complex processes and instrumentation these days. Hospitals need to be recognizing that contribution and compensating them accordingly," said David Narance, reprocessing manager for Mansfield, OH-based MedCentral Health System. "These people are putting their lives on the line with the job they do every day. They are really infection control specialists and deserve respect for their role in protecting the patient."

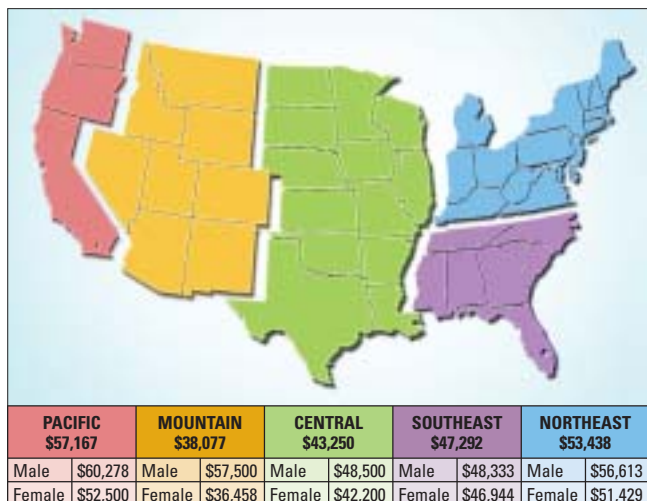
Indeed, CS professionals are taking on a wide range of responsibilities – all of which contribute greatly to the delivery of quality patient care. Over one-third (35 percent) of respondents report to their facilities' material management director, while 30 percent report to the operating room director, indicating that today's CS professionals are tackling more than the typical sterilization and decontamination duties. Nearly one-quarter of respondents are licensed or experienced in hospital purchasing and 17 percent are capable of assuming hospital storeroom manager duties. Roughly 15 percent are registered nurses and 8 percent are experienced or licensed in infection control, representing figures that are right on par with 2005 survey data.

These cross-over roles can pay big dividends. When MedCentral found itself lacking weekend coverage of the material management distribution stat room, a mini warehouse used for emergency materials back-up, the CS department stepped in. Individuals were cross-trained to run the warehouse – training that ultimately led to an equity pay adjustment, according to Narance. "I felt that if these folks were on hook to do the work [of material managers] in this area then they should be earning the same when they're in that role. It took some time, but we were able to make that happen."

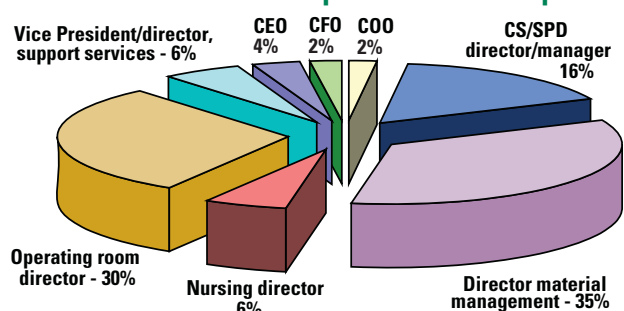
Given the breadth of experience the average CS employee possesses, it should come as little surprise that today's SPD professionals are taking greater charge of their education and certification status as well. All respondents reported having at least some type of certification, whether from professional CS organizations or those representing the nursing, materials management or infection control professions.



## Salary vs region:



## CS/SPD professionals report to:



More than half of respondents (52 percent) are certified by the International Association of Healthcare Central Service Materiel Management (up slightly over the 2005 47 percent total). Roughly 20 percent are certified by the American Society of Healthcare Central Service Professionals, and 12 percent are certified by the Certification Board For Sterile Processing and Distribution Inc. Rounding out respondents' certification affiliation are the Association of periOperative Registered Nurses (10 percent), the Association for Healthcare Resource & Materials Management (5 percent), and the Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (1 percent).

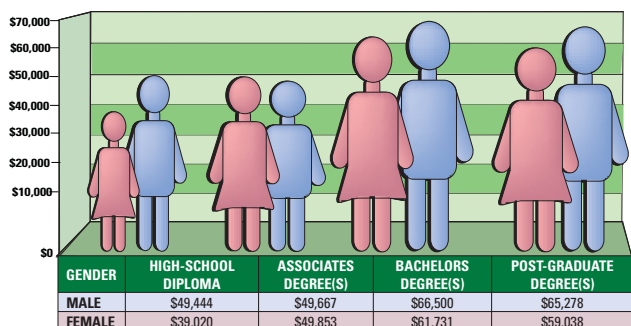
Sterile processing veteran Natalie Lind explained, not only has awareness surrounding the value of certification and continuing education grown tremendously, resulting in a greater push by administrators to have their CS employees certified, CS professionals themselves are more savvy about taking charge of their careers.

"I think what we're seeing are people coming into CS with the intent of staying with it, rather than just falling into the job and moving on as soon as something else becomes available," explained Lind, who operates Lind Consulting Services in Ada, MN. "They're making better career choices by becoming certified and committing themselves to ongoing education."

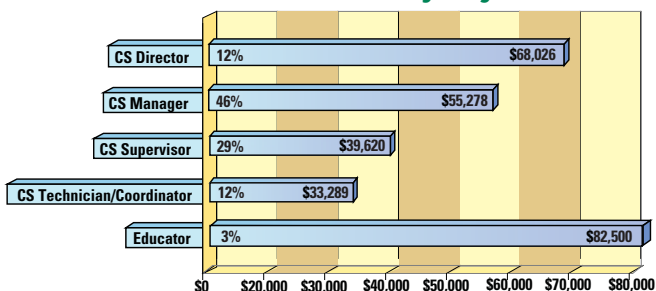
While 42 percent of respondents listed high school as their highest level of education, slightly more than 30 percent have earned an Associate's Degree, up from 27 percent in 2005. Slightly more than 14 percent have Bachelor's Degrees and 14 percent have post-graduate degrees, a more than three-fold increase from the previous survey. As for continuing education courses, about one-quarter of respondents take between one and four classes annually, while nearly 20 percent complete five to nine. Impressively, 19 percent of respondents revealed they participate in more than 20 classes a year – a total that far surpassed 2005's 17 percent total.

Committing to professional growth and staying abreast of industry- and technology-related changes appears to be paying off in more ways than just salary. According to the survey, more than half (58 percent) of respondents noted they feel "very secure" in their current positions, as opposed to the 54 percent who felt that way in 2005.

### Salary vs gender & education:



### Salary vs job function:



### Employee snapshot

While there's certainly no one-size-fits-all profile for all CS professionals, those who completed the 2006 salary survey shared some strikingly similar characteristics.

Not only did the majority (87 percent) work in non-profit facilities, 72 percent revealed they work in standalone hospitals, with more than half (58 percent) of respondents' facilities having at least 100 beds and no more than 399. This year's respondents predominantly work in smaller departments, too. Twenty-three percent indicated they work in a one- to five-employee department, while another 17 percent operate among a team of six to ten. More than one-third report directly to the director of material management (with operating room director coming in a close second at 30 percent, followed by CS/SPD director or manager at 16 percent).

While one might assume CS professionals working in larger facilities make more, that's not always the case, as this year's survey revealed. While those in 300- to 399-bed facilities made an average of \$56,719 – topping the salaries of those in 200- to 299-bed facilities by more than \$10,000, respondents from hospitals with 400 to 499 beds made \$49,615, on average. Working in larger CS departments doesn't automatically translate into larger salaries, either. Even though those operating in six to ten employee departments earn an average of \$50,390, those working with more than 30 staffers make slightly less (\$50,227), the survey showed.

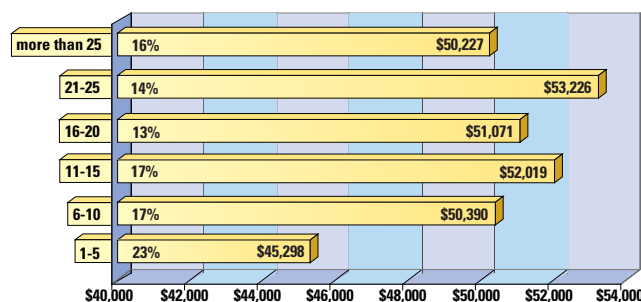
### Eye on the future

Despite the survey's predominantly positive findings, some aspects weren't quite so rosy. Among the most glaring downfalls is the continuing wage chasm between male and female CS staffers. While still a predominantly female-dominated profession (68 percent of respondents were female), the pay rate for this group is far less than for their male counterparts.

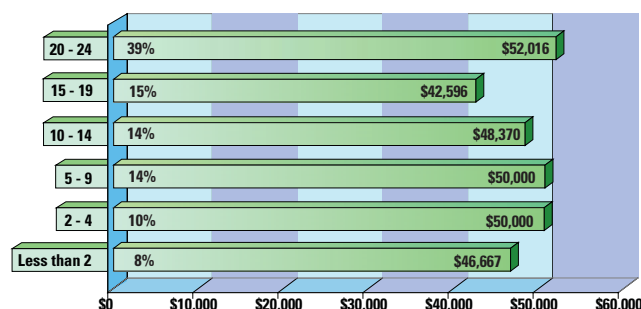
Some regions fared worse on the pay scale than others. Mountain region facilities paid females the least (\$36,458, on average), representing roughly \$21,000 less than males in the same region. Female

*See CS SALARY SURVEY on page 56*

### Salary vs department size:



### Salary vs years in CS/SPD:



# NEWS

CS SALARY SURVEY from page 55

employees in the Central region drew in \$42,200, compared to \$48,500 for males, while females and males in the Northeast made \$51,429 and \$56,613, respectively. Despite a relatively wide pay gap, Pacific-based facilities compensated the most for both females and males at \$52,500 and \$60,278, respectively. Although the Southeast didn't rank on the high end of the 2006 salary scale, gender doesn't appear to be as much a factor in this region; female staffers earned an average \$46,944, while male employees' salaries came in just slightly higher at \$48,333.

The age and tenure of today's CS employees could present its own set of challenges for the profession in the not-so-distant future. The survey revealed that more than 43 percent fall between the age of 46 and 55, with respondents having worked an average 10 years in the field. More than 17 percent have tenures spanning at least two decades.

Although employment longevity is certainly a positive, some are concerned that retirement could spur a shortage reminiscent of the nursing profession.

"Already, we're seeing that many facilities don't have enough employees on staff," said Nancy Stierheim, CRCST, RN, a consultant based in Pittsburgh, PA. The solution for many, she said, is hospitals doling out more money for traveling, temporary staff.

"If these facilities poured that same money into their permanent employees, I believe they'd be able to keep them around longer" and wouldn't have to resort to stop-gap measures.

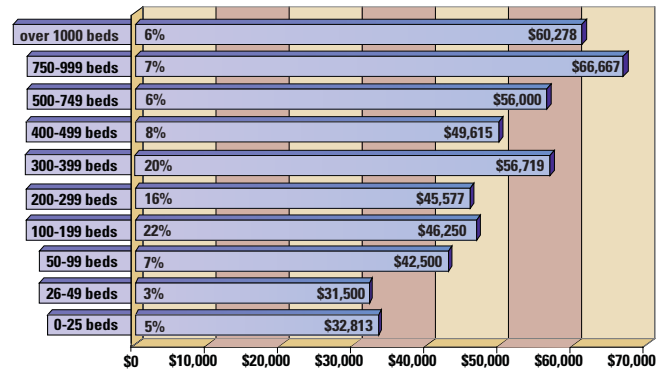
Lind and Stierheim both agreed that a shortage in SPD staff could wind up benefiting the profession in the end. "When the nursing short-

## Salary vs type & location of facility:

age became a real problem, we saw pay and incentives increase tremendously and there was a new-found respect given to nurses," said Lind. "This may just bring our profession to the forefront, too, making it necessary for facilities to raise salaries and educational requirements to better promote quality and interest within the profession." HPN

TYPE OF FACILITY		
For profit	8%	\$47,500
Government-owned	4%	\$33,333
Non-profit	87%	\$50,833
None of the above	2%	\$52,500
LOCATION OF FACILITY		
Rural	22%	\$41,250
Suburban	25%	\$51,098
Urban	53%	\$53,052

## Salary vs number of beds:



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