

## **Premier hospitals divert 60 tons, save \$5 million using SterilMed's SUD reprocessing services**

Few will argue that the disposable society we've lived in for many years has taken its toll on the environment; even in healthcare, where disposable products have proven to be firmly entrenched because of convenience and reducing the risk of cross contamination, more and more hospitals are rethinking the practice of throwing away expensive devices science has now shown can be safely reused.

Hemodialyzers were among the first so-called single-use devices (SUDs) that hospitals began reprocessing back in the early 1980s; other kinds of SUDs gradually followed suit over the years. Over the past five years, however, with environmental awareness and cost pressures increasing exponentially, the practice of reprocessing SUDs has become widespread. Just eight years ago, a survey of OR managers indicated that over a four-year period, the reuse of single-use devices almost doubled. Now that the FDA approves SUD reprocessing (under strict conditions and tight regulations) and CMS provides the same reimbursement as SUDs, the practice has grown even more. In fact, in its 2006 ranking of the country's top hospitals (by *U.S. News and World Report*), 93 percent of the nation's "Honor Roll" medical centers reported having SUD reprocessing programs.

In its September 2006 report to Congress, Dr. Schultz, Director, Center for Devices and Radiological Health (CDRH) at the FDA, reported that reprocessed SUDs that meet FDA's regulatory requirements are as safe and effective as a new device.

"Every day, a hospital reuses hundreds of medical devices, yet there is a wide variety of devices that are labeled for single use only," said Kathy Everson R.N., clinical marketing manager for Maple Grove, MN-based reprocessor SterilMed, a Premier contracted supplier. "Some manufacturers suggest that you use each device only once and then throw it away. But thousands of SUDs can be safely reprocessed and used again, some up to five times."

Everson points to the negative impact of disposed devices on the environment, the cost savings for hospitals, and the fact that SUD reprocessing has become an accepted safe practice when FDA and infection control guidelines are properly followed. "Since many hospital mission statements speak to improving the quality of life in their communities, waste avoidance should be a high priority," she added.

It is such a high priority with Premier hospitals, in fact, that in 2005 alone, Premier hospitals reprocessed more than 60 tons of single-use devices with SterilMed. "That's equivalent to 1,500,000 EP catheters, 800,000 trocars, or 400,000 SCD sleeves pairs – enough to go from San Diego to San Francisco (500 miles) if laid end to end," Everson said. "And, let's not forget the tons of oil and metal or electricity conserved." Reprocessing SUDs through SterilMed also saved Premier hospitals nearly \$5 million, she added, "enough to pay for over 60 full-time nurses or the healthcare co-premiums for 7,500 people."

***Premier Contract: SterilMed PP-OR-170 Sterile Reprocessing***  
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## **About SterilMed**

SterilMed's on-site reprocessing and repair management program employs an integrated approach to medical device reprocessing and small equipment and instrument repair. The company complies with the same standards as leading medical device manufacturers, the FDA Quality System Requirements (QSRs), and is ISO 13485 certified.

Everson said SterilMed performs an "exhaustive" series of state-of-the-art validation tests in order to determine if a device will retain its functionality and be effectively cleaned and sterilized after use. Only after the test results are submitted to the FDA for review and clearance to determine they meet the same cleanliness and functional specifications as a new device, are devices cleared for reprocessing, she added.

"When you choose a reprocessed device, you get the same functionality, cleanliness and sterility as a new device," she said. "You can select the same brands, perform the same surgical operations and clinical procedures and achieve the same clinical outcomes."

For more information on the issue of reuse of single-use devices, visit the Premier Safety Institute Web site at <http://www.premierinc.com/quality-safety/tools-services/safety/topics/reuse>.

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