

The Benefits of Sterile Single Use Instruments

Decontamination & Sterilisation

With Sterile Single Use surgical instruments there is an absolute guarantee that each examination will be performed with a completely clean and sterile instrument, since the Sterile Single Use instruments are disposed of after each procedure.

This also eliminates the need for a lengthy and costly decontamination process as seen with reusable instruments.

In the case of a smaller surgery or clinic, use of Sterile Single Use instruments therefore removes all the costs associated with operating an autoclave, including adherence to compliance regulations and expenditures such as the dead time spent running decontamination cycles.

The HTM 2030 guidelines for National Decontamination mean that small practices and surgeries now have to comply with the same standards as set for Sterile Service facilities in NHS Acute Trusts, and achieving such compliances is a very significant cost in terms of both finance and manpower.

Risk Management

Managing the risk of infection and cross-infection will be high on the agenda of every healthcare professional. The danger posed by 'prion diseases' such as 'Variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease' (vCJD), and the like, is a major consideration when considering a move to Sterile Single Use surgical instruments. It is reported that the prion found in neurological tissue that infects a person with vCJD, can survive for up to 10 decontamination cycles, suggesting that many reusable surgical instruments are being utilised in a contaminated state.

Selecting Sterile Single Use surgical instruments therefore reduces the risk of iatrogenic infection and provides improved peace of mind for both surgeons and healthcare managers.

All Sterile Single Use surgical instruments are marked with the internationally recognised logo for "Single Use" and the words Single Use, also the CE Mark, in accordance with the British, European and International quality management systems ISO 13485.

Anything that has this mark on it is a single use item intended for disposal after one patient use.

Instrument Traceability

Every item of the Sterile Single Use surgical instrument range is individually traceable all the way back to its production date and batch, with a tear off ID strip that can be placed on patients notes. It is recommended that the ID numbers for traceability are recorded on the patients notes. This can be useful for investigation of compliance occurring after surgery is completed.

Logistics & Supplies

Expansion of the role of GP surgeries and the development of Poly-Clinics will see an increasing number of Minor Surgery procedures being carried out in Primary Care settings.

It is essential that such centres have sufficient quantities of ready to use sterile surgical equipment, but retaining stocks of expensive reusable surgical instruments is far from cost effective. In addition, time constraints of sending reusable surgical instruments out to regional sterilisation centres will lead to delays in procedures and last minute cancellation lists.

Purchasing Sterile Single Use surgical instruments allows the clinic to manage their own supplies in line with their demand at a low cost.

Cost Allocation

With current financial constraints and an increasingly cost aware health service, it is important that the true cost of each procedure can be accurately assessed.

When opting for Sterile Single Use surgical instruments and Procedure Packs, these costs are simple and easy to calculate.



However, attributing cost when using reusable surgical instruments is seldom as accurate, as the true cost of sterilisation and instrument tracking is difficult to record, with many costs hidden in utility bills and staffing Costs.

Environmental Impact

Sterile Single Use surgical instruments fall under the legal definition of clinical waste, and must be disposed of in accordance with the National and European Clinical Waste Regulations, which currently mean that they go for incineration and landfill, raising concerns as to their environmental impact.

However, it is very important to recognise that Healthcare Essentials Ltd can offer an alternative to incineration and landfill.

A reusable surgical instrument must undergo the thorough decontamination and sterilisation regime, which includes the use of large amounts of water, detergent, steam & electricity, to prepare it for re-use. In addition, there may be transport considerations if the facilities are not on site.

The environmental impact of the use of the utilities and detergents must be assessed when comparing the ecological effects of Sterile Single Use to reusable instruments.

Cost

The relative cost of using Sterile Single Use surgical instruments compares very favourably with the alternative of the re-sterilisation of reusable instruments, when one considers all the overheads associated with the latter option.

Staff time, equipment maintenance, utility consumption and replacement instruments are just some of the costs associated with in-house decontamination and sterilisation, along with administration costs of instrument tracking and management.

Enforcement of the National Decontamination Strategy will only increase these expenses, as many autoclaves will need to be replaced with the latest compliant models and many buildings refurbished to allow for segregated 'clean' and 'dirty' rooms.

Conclusion

Taken on balance then, it is evident that use of Sterile Single Use surgical instruments in place of reusable instruments will generate:

- Improved cost efficiency
- Improved clinical management
- Improved managerial peace of mind
- Improved patient care
- Improved waste reduction
- Improved infection control
- Reduction in CO2 emissions
- Reduction in your carbon footprint