The Problem

- **Problem** - Safety (PACE) rounds identified single use disposable and Central Processing Department (CPD) quality instruments were left in the DUR without a standardized system for disposing/processing. Patient care equipment was also placed in the DUR without clarification as to what dept. accountable for collecting, cleaning and restocking. Existing practice triggered sharp safety risk; infection control non-compliance; and, demonstration of inconsistent/wasteful equipment management and what department(s) accountable for managing.

- **Scope** - all inpatient and outpatient dirty utility rooms.

- **Impact** – safe handling, cleaning and reuse of Central Processing instruments and patient care equipment. Safe disposal of single-use instruments.

- **IOM Dimensions of Quality Care** - Efficiency, Timeliness, and Safety

Aim/Goal

To establish a safe and effective process for managing patient care equipment including instruments that are routinely placed in the dirty utility room (DUR).

The Team (representatives from the following):

- Environmental Health and Safety
- Patient Care Services & UCO’s
- Infection Control Dept.
- Distribution Dept.
- Environmental Services Dept.
- Maintenance Dept.
- Clinical Engineering Dept.
- Employee Occupational Health Dept.
- Central Processing Dept.
- All Other Ancillary Depts. that provides patient care equipment

The Interventions

- PACE audit findings of instruments, equipment and work practices in using the DUR’s were categorized including interviews with staff.
- Explored with regulatory agency (DPH) if single use metal instruments could be safely recycled.
- Team formed to clarify who accountable for each item placed in DUR, frequency for collection for storage for reuse.
- Reference table created to identify collection location, responsible for collection/processing and who to contact if not completed in a timely manner. Added to EOC 26 Equipment Storage & Repair Policy
- Clarified with DPH that single use metal instruments cannot be recycled at this time. Staff instructed to dispose in sharps containers.

The Results/Progress to Date

- Clarification made that single use instruments were not as good as the CPD quality instruments. Inadvertent mixing of these two types of instruments in sterile kits could have an adverse impact on patient safety.
- Sustainability goal to recycle waste e.g. metal single use instruments could not be actualized due to current regulations and available resources.
- Educating staff to proper disposal of single use instruments decreased confusion on how to dispose safely.
- Identifying who responsible for DUR stored equipment supported more efficient turn around for use and who to call if “abandoned”.

Lessons Learned

- Continue to monitor practices to assure defined system is effective
- To continue to explore options for recycling metal instruments including discussions with current biohazard/sharp collection company regarding future sustainability processing enhancements
- Work closely with EOHS to monitor and investigate employee injuries associated with DUR storage.

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