

Resolving Infection Control Challenges from the Ground Up

West Coast facility overcomes deficiencies in high-level disinfection processes, sterile processing functions

Client

A Joint Commission-accredited acute care hospital with 172 beds, a medical staff of over 230 physicians, and several specialty clinics and outpatient primary care clinics.

Background & challenges

The medical center had very specific infection control issues it sought to overcome, specifically related to high-level disinfection processes and sterile processing functions. Compounding these issues was a lack of policies and procedures for these areas.

The organization had previously been cited by CMS for issues regarding both endoscope cleaning and central sterile processing. CMS expects standards promulgated by the Association for the Advancement of Medical Instrumentation (AAMI) and the Association of Perioperative Nursing (AORN) to be followed by organizations performing high-level disinfection and the sterilization of instruments and supplies.

After examining the root causes of the issues, hospital leadership determined that the best course of action was a full operational redesign with The Greeley Company that would allow these processes to start from a blank slate. They asked what the key processes should be, how the organization should be staffed, and what policies and procedures they needed.

Prior to Greeley's arrival, an interim director of surgical services had helped facilitate improvements in high-level disinfection of endoscopes. There remained, however, challenges with accurately documenting the required quality assurance processes. In addition, the organization had experienced staffing challenges related to central sterile processing, including staff out on leave and a number of open positions.

Greeley Findings & Solutions

Greeley conducted an operational review of central sterile processing including:

- Leadership interviews
- Policy and procedure review
- Evaluation of practice in central sterile, operating rooms, endoscopy rooms, and gastroenterology rooms and select clinics
- Review of infection control and quality control logs
- Staff scheduling, training, and competency assessment

During the on-site assessment, Greeley consultants uncovered additional challenges:

- The consultants noted that the organization had air flow issues in the sterile processing area and was not able to monitor temperature and humidity in this department as required.
- Additionally, the consultants identified that staff were not conducting manual cleaning processes per the AAMI standards and that some staff lacked adequate education and training on certain processes, including appropriate sterile attire and the sterilization of loaner equipment.

“In some cases, loaner equipment came sterilized from another facility and staff was using it based on that other organization’s sterility,” said the consultant. “The proper process is to unwrap it and re-sterilize it per the manufacturer’s recommendations and AAMI standards.”

- Consultants also found that the placement of trays and supplies in the autoclaves was inconsistent and did not follow AAMI standards.

Greeley provided a detailed report, including deficiencies the consultants noted during their assessment and recommendations for actions the hospital should take.

Greeley also supplied a number of policies and other documents for the organization to work from to correct its deficiencies and achieve full compliance, including:

- Policies that could immediately be put into effect to rectify current challenges, including:
 - Care and maintenance of sterilizers
 - Cleaning and decontamination of surgical instruments
 - Early release of implants and sterilized trays
 - Exception form for release of implantable devices
 - Immediate use steam sterilization
 - Preparation and assembly of surgical instruments
 - Steam sterilization of surgical instruments and patient care devices

- Steam sterilization quality control and sterility assurance
- Traffic patterns in the perioperative setting
- Quality management tools to ensure sustainability for measures put into place to improve non-compliant processes including:
 - Surgical services indicator list
 - Sterile processing audit and reporting tool
 - Sterile processing department assessment tool
- Tools for improving temperature and humidity control in the operating room, including:
 - Operating room temperature and humidity white paper
 - Temperature and humidity in the OR (policy)
- Central service technician documents including:
 - Technician job description
 - Technician annual competency skills assessment

In addition, Greeley developed and provided the organization with a comprehensive action plan with identified steps to ensure full compliance with CMS and AAMI standards.

“Lastly, we left them with information regarding the framework for compliance to ensure sustainability of these improvements,” said the Greeley consultant. “We gave them a clear roadmap to help them get back into compliance and remain in compliance in the future.”

ABOUT GREELEY

The Greeley Company

Headquartered in the greater Boston area, The Greeley Company serves administrative and clinical teams in more than 500 healthcare organizations nationwide each year—ranging from the largest healthcare systems and academic medical centers to critical access rural hospitals. We have a rich history of providing innovative consulting, education, outsourcing solutions, interim staffing, and external peer review to healthcare organizations nationwide. Greeley focuses on contemporary needs and challenges related to medical staff optimization & physician alignment; accreditation, regulatory compliance & quality; and credentialing & privileging.

Our mission

The Greeley Company's mission is to help healthcare organizations improve efficiency, comply with regulations and standards, achieve practitioner engagement and alignment, and excel in delivering high-quality, cost-effective patient care.

Our clients

Our clients include healthcare organizations of all sizes and types—from large, multi-setting healthcare systems and academic medical centers to critical access rural hospitals. We work with clinical and administrative individuals and teams across the entire organization including physicians, executives, directors, managers, and frontline staff.

Our advisors and staff

The Greeley Company provides our clients with a dedicated team of advisors who bring valuable experience and rich backgrounds as former hospital, nurse, and physician executives, as former “Big 4” consultants, and as former regulatory surveyors. Our professionals understand your pain and provide the breadth and depth of preparation, training, and education needed to drive success. Behind our advisors stand talented management and support staff committed to ensuring the highest level of customized attention and client fulfillment.

Contact us

Please contact us at 888/749-3054 or info@greeley.com for more information on how The Greeley Company can help you meet your challenges and goals.