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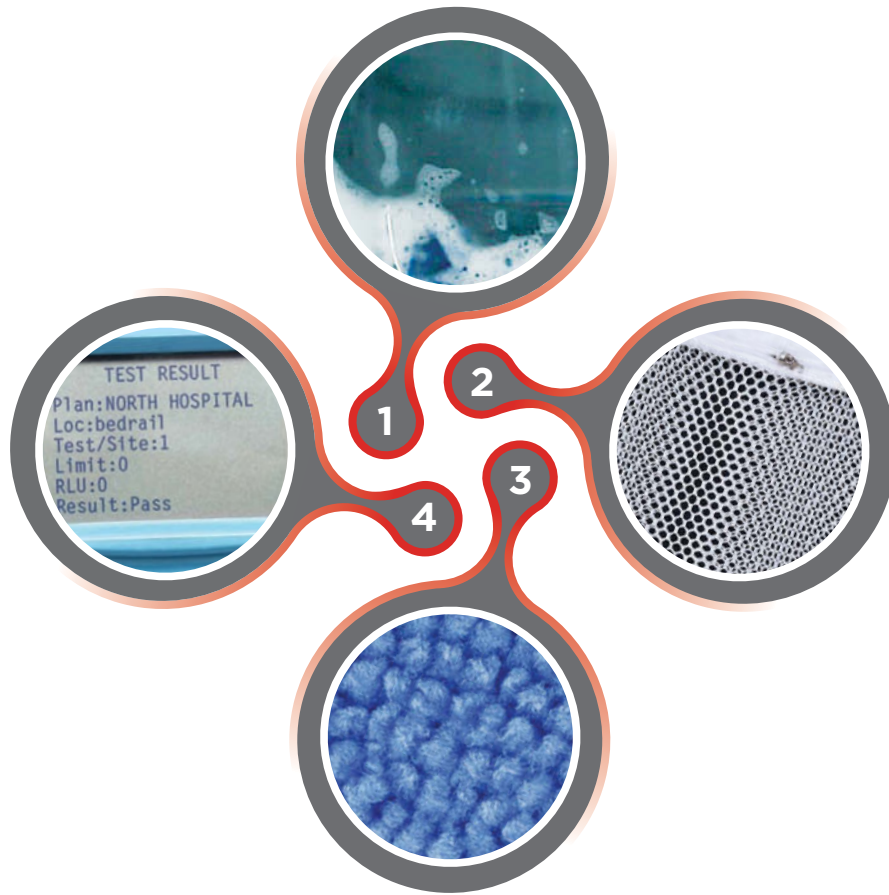
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Publisher: Jeff Carnes

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PUBLISHED NOVEMBER 2015/AHE-Q0415/1032

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www.ahe.org | Winter 2015



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TEXTILES THAT HEAL

The Future of Health Care Textiles and Their Effect on the Patient Experience

By Gabriel Boardman

As we observe the latest trends in health care, two of those trends are glaringly prevalent: our growing concern over infection and cross-contamination, as well as our renewed interest in the greening of our industry. And these two trends are the fruits of an over-encompassing trend: The greying demographics.

Our planet has never had to handle so many individuals, but even more so, never has there been such a large percentage of individuals 65 years or older. This affects all geographical markets differently, at varying degrees, but most are developing towards a similar result. It is estimated that by 2030, 55 countries may see their elderly population represent a fifth of their total population. For a country like Japan, it is estimated that percentage could climb as high as 40 percent of their total population.

Of course, this hike is partly due to lower birth rates, better health care, and longer life expectancies. Baby boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) will soon all have reached retirement age, and what may be of more concern, when it comes to the trend of greying demographics, is that the next generation in line is generation X; a generation that is more demanding and that will not settle for mediocre compromises. Whether we qualify as baby boomer or gen X, we are the next customers of our

health care system. And next in line are our children. This will *not* be an easy ride!

How can we address the needs and the issues that await? What should we focus on to do our part in providing the best services, the best system, and most importantly, the best care? Acute care and senior living will both be under serious pressure to offer services of greater quality and value, and this will undoubtedly have an impact on our linens, among many other things.

Here we've identified three main areas of development where manufacturers and distributors of health care linens are concentrating their efforts. These were all identified as important factors in addressing the needs of the aging population, and work is being done throughout the industry to strive to address these developing needs. These areas, which are strongly influenced by our greying demographics, are infection control, environmental concerns, and the patient experience.

Infection Control

As more and more reports of hospital acquired conditions spread, as these concerns grow, patients will be educating themselves, asking questions, wanting to ensure their provider will protect them as best as they can.

Once such way to address these concerns has been the vast introduction of anti-microbials, which has been on the radar of textile manufacturers for many



years. Many options and variations are offered, and although not suitable for all applications, it is important to keep an eye out on the sector, as changes and progress occur on a regular basis. It is important to understand what each option can deliver and how it meets the expectations of the population that will experience it first-hand.

Infection control gowns are also going through many changes, offering varying degrees of protection. Contrary to popular belief, the gowns are primarily designed to protect the patient, whose immune system may be weakened, and not necessarily the person wearing the gown. For that reason, the level of protection can only be ensured



“Designers will be tasked with reproducing linens that will help our patients forget where they are so that they can focus on healing.”

if the garment is properly used and worn, paving the way for increased education on best practices within facilities. Some manufacturers are considering, and some already offering, gowns that offer a much more user-friendly closure system for maximized and more efficient protection.

Of all the surfaces in a hospital, a patient will have the greatest degree of contact with his/her own gown and the bed linens he/she lies on. Although health care linens present valid concerns to the transmittal of HAIs, as an industry it is our responsibility to present solutions and base conversations on facts. Facts documenting that although many studies address the presence of microbes on

textiles, there is little documentation of actual transmission.

Also, as many of us are directly related to the laundries that process the linen, it is important to help them be their own strongest advocates. Few reports in literature link laundry to disease transmission when proper procedures are followed. That is a massive statement as currently in the U.S., 10 billion pounds of health care linens are processed each year. To encourage all health care linen manufacturers, this is double what was processed only 30 years ago!

Environmental Concerns

Our general population is an audience that has been sensitized to environmental

concerns. Baby boomers and the like understand the impact of their individual, small decisions having big impacts. This population has experimented with recycling and they make conscious, educated choices daily (electric cars, fair trade coffee beans, pesticide-free vegetables, eco-friendly, naturally dyed, etc.) that allow them to address their own ecological concerns as responsible individuals.

For that reason, health care textile professionals often went off the assumption that because individuals made better, more sustainable choices in their personal lives, the same decisions would transfer into the health care environment. Of course, we would all make the obvious ecological

“It is often stated that comfortable, plush, soft, and warm are descriptors that help make patients feel more relaxed, despite being in uncomfortable (institutional) surroundings.”

choice, wouldn't we? But as much as we want to believe it, that remains debatable. Landfills that overflow with disposables are difficult to argue against. But disposables are not the only products that have significant impacts on the environment. The reusable industry is consistently looking for ways to diminish their footprint. Products dry faster to minimize the use of fuel and electricity; products have superior stain-release properties to eliminate costly rewash (as well as unnecessary use of water); longer-lasting products minimize the number of discarded; products are washed in cold water whilst using less chemicals; cycles reuse water; some facilities are fully eliminating folding and are instead bulk bagging linen...and the list goes on.

As well, and we believe it is one of the most difficult aspects to master, we all strive to provide our customers with options and solutions that are both environmentally conscious and sustainable, whilst fitting into pre-existing budgets. Because no matter how beneficial a product will be to the environment and no matter which generation we identify with, “how much will it cost me today” will likely continue to transcend through years and generations.

The Patient Experience

Two touch points tend to be at the forefront of what we call the patient experience: comfort and care.

In the United States, the broader use and awareness of HCAHPS (Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems) questionnaires are bringing further attention to the discussion around the patient experience. Although there may still be debate over the HCAHPS questions themselves, they can still be looked at as a relevant part of an overall process—these questions can serve to inspire the industry.

Health care systems are becoming increasingly customer-centric, even more so in the United States than in most other countries. The patient experience is made of a number of touch points, with hospital

linens, patient gowns, and privacy curtains, amongst others, all playing a part.

Keep in mind that patients or residents do not surrender their identities as they enter our facilities; they are still consumers, individuals, twitterers, facebookers, and unlike our parents and grandparents, their easy access to communication channels with extraordinary reach has become a natural way of life. The good—but most commonly the bad—gets shared quickly. As participants in the health care community, we want to ensure the image that is communicated is positive. We are not only compared to the competition, or to other facilities, but we are also judged by what is expected by individuals who travel, who get to experience the extremely competitive hospitality market, who are aware of the various options in textiles, and who have made a habit of undergoing a strict selection process when it comes to their own purchases (products and experiences) that will impact their lives or the lives of their loved ones.

It is often stated that comfortable, plush, soft, and warm are descriptors that help make patients feel more relaxed, despite being in uncomfortable (institutional) surroundings. These characteristics help recreate familiar surroundings, much like many hotel chains attempt to do. Some of the items that are used in hospital or nursing homes are even labelled as boutique or “hotel-like” linens. These campaigns clearly address the needs of a much more demanding patient/resident population. For that reason, aesthetics, it is believed, will be further incorporated into the conversation tied to comfort. Designers will be tasked with reproducing linens that will help our patients forget where they are so that they can focus on healing.

A potential factor in comfort that may be overlooked is noise. The effect of noise in an environment (everything from megaphones, to chatter, to footsteps, to metal tracks) is significant to recovery and to the overall perception of comfort. Facilities are opting for products that are

quieter—forsaking vinyl mattress protectors and pillows that crinkle, and cubicle curtains that wake up patients in the middle of the night when they are pulled open for a quick check. The less disruptions there are, the better and faster the patient can heal.

Subjectively, comfort is different to each of us. In a hospital environment, however, scientists are beginning to find ways to test for comfort in objective ways by focusing on key factors that affect comfort tied to healing and health. Such factors as microclimate management, contact points on a patient's being, stiffness of linens, heat buildup (or lack thereof), and breathability are being looked at differently than ever before and are being identified as objective criteria of comfort. No matter which generation or individual we are addressing, finding the balance between the individual preferences and the optimal environment for care is the challenge.

Although improving comfort will make a stay a much more pleasant experience, no “comfort” improvement alone must ever be made at the expense of patient care.

Coming Up

As we are all currently involved, at one level or another, in the development of the future of health care linens, let's ensure we are developing the products we will be happy to experience first-hand. Even more so, let's make sure we consider and select the linens we will feel proud of when they will be used by the ones we love. ●



Gabriel Boardman is VP marketing and product management at MIP Inc. He coordinates the development of products and promotion across

five strategic business units that cover approximately 30 countries. He has been working in the health care textile industry for the past 25 years and has been a board member of the American Reusable Textile Association for the past three years.

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PARTNERS IN TEXTILE HYGIENE

How Environmental Services, Infection Prevention, and Health Care Laundry Can Enhance Linen Stewardship and Awareness

By Chad Basham, MBA, CHESP, Nellie League, MSN, RN, NE-BC, and Lynn Moreau, BSN, RN

Good relationships and working as a team make crises or events more manageable.

Chad Basham, MBA, CHESP, administrative director of Environmental Services, and Nellie League, MSN, RN, NE-BC, chief nurse executive/VP, both of Bon Secours St. Mary's Hospital in Richmond, VA, and Lynn Moreau, BSN, RN, clinical liaison manager, HandCraft Linen Services, recently shared their thoughts behind this statement at EXCHANGE 2015. During their session on Wednesday, Sept. 23, "Environmental Services, Infection Prevention, and Health Care Laundry: Partners in Textile Hygiene," they detailed how St. Mary's (a 391-licensed bed, not-for-profit hospital) partnered with its laundry provider to enhance management practices. The goal was to focus on teamwork and involving the individuals who have the greatest impact on textile hygiene and safe linen distribution and storage.

The Mucormycosis Fungus Scare

In spring 2014, national news revealed that back in 2009, linens at New Orleans Children's Hospital (NOCH) had been contaminated with the fungus mucormycosis. Per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), five case-patients had hospital-associated cutaneous (skin) mucormycosis over an 11-month period, and all subsequently died. A May 2014

article in the *Pediatric Infectious Disease Journal* raised concerns about NOCH's response to the outbreak. The *New York Times* highlighted the journal's report citing "lapses in the hospital's infection controls and sloppy handling of contaminated linens."

The *Times* also reported that "workers unloaded clean linens on the same dock where medical waste was removed, moved clean and soiled linens on the same carts, and stored linens in hospital hallways covered in dust from a nearby construction site." The CDC and Louisiana State Health Department found the mucormycosis occurred on several different units throughout the hospital, and hospital linens were the only exposure identified as common to the case-patients.

So, what next? HandCraft, St. Mary's laundry partner, took this news seriously and wanted to make sure its health care linen customers did as well. Realizing there were opportunities for St. Mary's to enhance linen stewardship and awareness, it involved all levels of environmental services and clinical staff in a linen stewardship program in partnership with their laundry provider. This included rounds, educational handouts, quiz contests, and tours of the provider's laundry facilities. Soon, everyone involved realized that teamwork between the hospital and laundry provider yielded greater linen stewardship and accountability.

The NOCH Response: HandCraft's Strategy

The strategy involved four components: communication, validation, education, and collaboration.

- 1 Communication:** The goal was to ensure HandCraft management, sales teams, and hospital customer service representatives all knew the facts surrounding the circumstances at NOCH.
- 2 Validation:** HandCraft reviewed and evaluated current operations practices within its laundry to ensure they were consistent with the laundry industry's best practices.
- 3 Education:** This was an opportunity to review and reinforce infection prevention principles and hand hygiene emphasis in plant operations.
- 4 Collaboration:** Last but not least, HandCraft wanted to enhance partnerships with its customers. They used this opportunity to educate about NOCH and ensure hospitals clearly understood best practices for handling and storage of clean and soiled linen.

HandCraft made rounds in its hospitals to assist in evaluating hospital procedures and linen rooms. Environmental services, infection preventionists (IPs), and nursing executives/management were involved as much as possible. Some hospitals enhanced cleaning procedures of linen rooms and



linen storage areas. Challenges included hospital staff properly filling and securely tying soiled linen bags, but handouts and education rounds helped improve soiled linen collection processes.

HandCraft focused on seven key laundry functions to ensure hygienically clean linen:

1. Proper collecting and sorting contaminated hospital textiles.
2. Proper transporting of contaminated hospital textiles.
3. Maintaining division of clean and soiled areas in the laundry.
4. Appropriate sorting, laundering, drying, and ironing of hospital textiles.
5. Proper transport and storage of clean hospital textiles.
6. Cleaning and disinfection of the plant and transportation fleet.
7. Hygienic handling of linen by staff during production and distribution.

The NOCH Response: St. Mary's Strategy

The St. Mary's team took a similar strategic approach to the NOCH event using the same four components: communication, validation, education, and collaboration.

1 Communication: The hospital shared the story of NOCH events with its staff. Many had not heard of the unfortunate circumstances at NOCH.

2 Validation: Current infection prevention practices within the hospital were reviewed to ensure they were consistent with evidence-based best practices for health care linen. A collaborative inspection of the linen room revealed an opportunity to reconfigure it, resulting in a designated clean linen storage area and soiled linen storage area. Environmental services set up a routine cleaning schedule for those areas as well.

3 Education: St. Mary's, like HandCraft, used this opportunity to reinforce infection prevention guidelines and hand hygiene throughout the hospital.

4 Collaboration: In partnering with its laundry provider, St. Mary's used that collaborative effort to review best practices, make some needed changes, and acknowledge staff who were instrumental in the process.

St. Mary's stressed five key best linen practices in the hospital:

1. Separation during storage of clean and soiled linen.
2. Keep linen covered at all times.
3. Secure access to clean linen.
4. Use proper hand hygiene when touching clean linen and when removing soiled.
5. Keep the linen room clean from top to bottom.

Well-Prepared for Ebola

Collaborative efforts came just in time for the next crisis: the Ebola events in the fall 2014. At HandCraft, the NOCH response had created templates for activity regarding Ebola. HandCraft sent a customer-wide email to environmental services directors and IPs asking for a collaborative approach.

St. Mary's formed an interdisciplinary team to develop policies and procedures regarding potential Ebola patients. Management joined multiple CDC conference calls as the agency developed a response and identified best practices. Additionally, the hospital consulted with community partners, the state health department, and other acute care hospitals. CDC recommendations for linen in contact with a confirmed Ebola patient were followed, and a policy was developed to discard (incinerate) all linen in contact with an Ebola patient to reduce exposure to potentially contaminated textiles among staff.

Laundry Accreditation and Standards

Linen has long been recognized as fomites but almost never viewed as an HAI risk due to effective pathogen removal when best laundry practices are applied and correct handling, collection, and storage is applied. Hospitals should be knowledgeable regarding whether their contract laundries are accredited and/or certified.

Laundry accreditation through HLAC (Healthcare Laundry Accrediting Council) is based on the highest standards for patient safety and infection prevention. This accreditation's principle benefit is inspection by an independent third party to ensure the highest standards of processing. Hygienically Clean Certification through TRSA (Textile Rental Services Association) validates laundries' processes, verifying their commitment to cleanliness through third-party inspection and quantified biological testing, and using USP 62 protocol and RODAC testing.

Both HLAC accreditation and Hygienically Clean Certification are voluntary processes for health care laundries.

Keeping the Focus on the Patient

Past infection prevention challenges, such as NOCH and Ebola, should not be misconstrued. Everyday concerns, as well as these headline-makers, drive practices. We're concerned about measles resurgence in the U.S., Legionnaire's disease, listeria outbreaks, and contaminated endoscopes. Continuous preparedness, maintaining best practices, and teamwork create a "win-win," but the true winner is the patient. After all, *it's all about the patient.* ●

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TIPS FOR CRITICAL PARTNERSHIPS

QUICK TIPS FOR CRITICAL PARTNERSHIPS

Simple Ways to Encourage Collaboration to Prevent Disease Transmission

By Gail Fraine, RN, MMHC, BSN, CIC

As director of infection prevention at Ascension Health St. Thomas Midtown in Nashville, I describe the relationship between our team of infection preventionists (IPs) and environmental services as minimizing risk and increasing safety when it comes to preventing disease transmission.

Environmental Services and Infection Prevention

Somewhat rare in the industry, the environmental services team reports to infection prevention and serves on its committee. David Cope, director of Environmental Services at St. Thomas, and the system's director in the city, Michael Martin, work closely with our infection prevention team. We are very collaborative and discuss issues and changes to processes or products. For instance, ATP testing is performed on all positive *C. difficile* discharge patient rooms and other random samplings. The team is notified of any positive results. Rooms that are positive are re-cleaned, retested, and must pass before releasing the room for the next patient.

Tip: ATP testing is a good educational and validation tool to identify how well a room has been cleaned.

Environment-of-Care Rounds

Together these teams do weekly Environment of Care rounds joined by safety, facilities, nursing, and pharmacy representatives striving for continuous improvement. As with many facilities nationwide, priorities include cleanliness and maintenance of the facility, proper trash removal, safety, and other environmental concerns.

The team made a huge difference in OR turn-around times between cases by appointing one environmental services lead to oversee proper cleaning and turning of the room. Our focus on training, monitoring, and inspecting rooms with a ready resource keeps things on track and improves the overall environment.

Tip: Environment of Care rounds are best performed as a team due to the collaborative nature of consensus building, educational opportunities, and immediate attention to issues that are identified.

Preventing Disease Transmission

An example of helping to decrease transmission of disease to patients is preventing *C. difficile* on the front end with a bundle that includes:

- Hand hygiene
- Antimicrobial stewardship
- Isolation

- Proper decontamination of the environment
- Proper decontamination of the equipment
- Early recognition of patients with potential for *C. difficile*

On the back end, ATP testing immediately lets teams know how they are doing related to environmental cleaning. It educates and breeds competition between members to keep passage rates high (95 percent or greater). St. Thomas Health extends the test to hands, cell phones, thermometers, and other equipment to make sure the importance of the environmental services' role in getting rooms ready and the severity of results is well understood.

Tip: Testing of additional items offers immediate feedback on performance and can be an eye-opener on ways that the environment can become contaminated. It should include transparency of passage rates that can spark a healthy competition between teams getting rooms ready.

Preventing Sharps Injuries

Minimizing disease transmission at St. Thomas also focuses on what ECRI lists as a "top 10 health technology hazard—sharps injuries (SI)." A proactive exchange of reusable sharps containers allows hospitals to

“Only during periods of high volume, environmental services teams may be asked to change a container, but this is infrequent.”

minimize disposal SIs. The facility changed to a sharps management service and saw a 10 percent decrease in needle sticks. The burden was eased on the environmental services and health care personnel (HCP) teams to monitor containers because the sharps management service took care of it for us. Only during periods of high volume, environmental services teams may be asked to change a container, but this is infrequent. There have been no issues, and

the exchange of reusable sharps containers frees HCP and environmental services to focus on their main work.

Tip: Taking HCP away from the handling of sharps containers has helped reduce sharps injuries and potential for disease transmission.

C. difficile and Sharps Container Considerations

Recently a survey (found at www.bd.com/sharps/pdf/AJIC-MP-sharps-poster.pdf) attempted to associate reusable sharps containers with transmission of *C. difficile*. There are several reasons I believe that there is a very low probability that reusable sharps containers play any role in disease transmission. If a container is full, environmental services will change it, but not HCP who has patient contact. Following care of our *C. difficile*-positive patients, HCP use a hand-washing technique with soap and water for 15 seconds before leaving the room and seeing the next patient. This step lessens the chance for cross-contamination to the environment and to themselves or others. This facility has not had any correlation in *C. difficile* infections related to reusable sharps containers, which have been used for more than five years.

Tip: Follow stringent IP practices and policies like hand hygiene, isolation, equipment disinfection, and sharps practices that are intended to keep HCP and patients safe.

Creating a collaborative atmosphere between environmental services and infection prevention teams, including the shaping of Environment-of-Care Rounds to include multiple departments and having a best-practice bundle, highlights the various ways to prevent disease transmission. Using reusable sharps containers not only prevents sharps injuries, as a service managed by a third party partner, but they may help minimize disease transmission. ●



Gail Fraine, RN, MMHC, BSN, CIC, is director of infection prevention at Ascension Health St. Thomas Midtown in Nashville, Tennessee.

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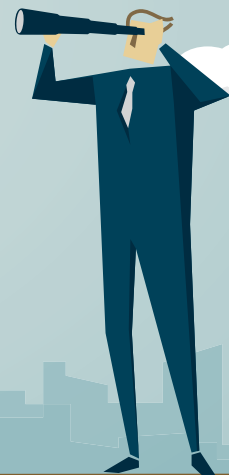


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SELECTING THE BEST PRODUCTS



Purchasing Hospital Textiles with Value Analysis in Mind

Q&A with Terri Nelson, RN, MA

We asked Terri Nelson, RN, MA, value analysis manager with Mayo Clinic, a few questions about selecting the best health care textile products.

Q. What does a value analysis manager do?

Nelson: The role of the Clinical Value Analysis Team is to work with the end users, which includes both the clinical staff and the linen team, in selecting the best valued product for their practice.

Q. What would be your top considerations when purchasing linens/textiles for a hospital setting?

Nelson: Where is the product going to be used? That is the first question we ask. What are staff expectations? For example, if we are looking for a patient gown, we would ask clinical staff how will they use the gown and what product attributes are needed. They may say they need a patient gown that will provide coverage and allow the clinical staff to access the chest. When working with linen staff we need to understand where the product is stored. Is shelving space limited? We also ask about infection control requirements, if any.

Q. Most people would assume that the most expensive product will satisfy the best. In your experience, has this generally been true?

Nelson: For all products we use a value equation. Price is important, but value is what we want to achieve.

$$\text{Value} = \frac{\text{Quality (Outcomes + Safety + Service)}}{\text{Cost}}$$

Q. Should you first consult your laundry processor about how these items will be cared for?

Nelson: We start with the clinical staff first, but right behind that is the laundry. We obtain information from the manufacturer regarding the products' characteristics, thread count, or special

coatings, and find out whether the manufacturer has laundering requirements. Once we have this information, we would talk with the laundry processor to address its ability to launder the items.

Q. Why is that important?

Nelson: It is part of the quality, service, and cost. Our laundry provides a service. If the item requires processing outside of the norm, this will impact its ability to provide service and potentially increase the cost.

Q. Is storage a concern? Why or why not?

Nelson: Yes, space is always limited. We consider where the product will be stored: warehouse or a store room near the users? How much stock do we keep to ensure we have clean product?

Q. Can you discuss how you make decisions based on the demands of cost/quality/outcomes?

Nelson: Our process includes developing an Award Matrix, making the decision more objective. The Award Matrix is two parts—one part includes the “non-financial” (quality, attributes, storage, etc.) and the second part is the financial (cost of product, cost of laundry, etc.). These are pulled into the Award Matrix. ●

Terri Nelson leads the Clinical Quality Value Analysis Team, which facilitates the value analysis process, maintains the product formulary, and manages the product recall/issue system across all Mayo Clinic campus. Terri has been at Mayo Clinic for more than 30 years in the roles of staff nurse, nurse manager, practice analysis, and most recently as the value analysis manager.

THIS Q&A ORIGINALLY APPEARED IN THE FALL 2015 ISSUE OF *FRESH* MAGAZINE, A PUBLICATION OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR LINEN MANAGEMENT. TO LEARN MORE AND ACCESS THE *FRESH* ARCHIVES, VISIT WWW.ALMNET.ORG.

PLANT, PERSONNEL, AND PROCESS

25 Essential Considerations for Evaluating the Health Care Laundry

By Gregory Gicewicz

Health care professionals charged with assessing and selecting a textile service provider for their facility have a singular goal: To ensure the laundry provider follows the most rigorous of standards so clean textiles arrive at the facility free of contamination.

Therefore, visiting a potential health care laundry is a must and should include relevant representatives from environmental services and infection prevention. During the visit, focus the evaluation on the Three Ps: the plant, the personnel, and the process.

Here's a topline look at those Three Ps (for thorough detail, see the current edition of the Healthcare Laundry Accreditation Council's "Accreditation Standards for Processing Reusable Textiles for Use in Healthcare Facilities," available at www.hlacnet.org:

The Plant

1 How is the plant laid out? Ultimately, as you walk around the facility, you want to get a sense that you're in a building that has been designed in a way that promotes efficient workflow without compromising the protection and integrity of the health care textiles. Look for circumstances where clean linen might become contaminated. Is there proper airflow from clean to dirty? Are there areas where clean linen may come into contact with dirty linen? There's no room for shortcuts.

2 Does the laundry have policies and procedures for cleaning and maintaining the plant and its equipment? Does everything appear clean and free of lint? Look on the walls, tables, ceilings, and under equipment.

3 How does the laundry handle waste? Ask for an explanation of their policy for managing medical waste and hazardous substance-related wastes.

4 Is the provider in compliance with relevant regulations regarding air, water, wastewater, and chemicals?

5 What's the backup plan for providing uninterrupted operations and services? Does the provider have reciprocal processing agreement in place in the event of a disaster?

6 Stuff shouldn't happen: How does the provider ensure and maintain the proper functioning of the plant's equipment? Ask to see the equipment maintenance log to ensure that maintenance is being followed.

The Personnel

7 Are the employees—at all levels—focused on patient safety and service quality? Speak to the laundry personnel to learn as much as you can about the plant culture.

8 Do you get a sense of professionalism? How does the provider ensure and document that personnel are qualified for their respective positions, and are job descriptions clearly defined?

9 What if someone comes to work sick? What are the health and hygiene policies and procedures to prevent textiles from being handled by or exposure to personnel with potential health issues?



PHOTO CREDIT: Doug Walker

An employee doing a safety check as part of a laundry's process to ensure clean textiles arrive at a health care facility free of contamination.

10 Informational signage should be everywhere. For example, regarding the handling of chemicals, is safety information and signage readily accessible to personnel? Are contaminated linen areas clearly marked?

11 What are the procedures when personnel are exposed to hazards (e.g., biological, chemical, mechanical, etc.)? Ask employees for an explanation of those procedures.

12 What are the hand-washing and hand-hygiene procedures?

13 Are all personnel protected adequately? What are the provisions and procedures for personal protective equipment (PPE) and attire? Observe

“Functional separation is key to the process: How does the provider maintain and ensure the separation of clean textiles from soiled textiles?”

workers in areas exposed to soiled linen (washers, sorters, drivers). Are they wearing appropriate PPE?

14 Is there a program addressing occupational safety and health (e.g., exposure control plans, etc.)?

15 What about continued training? What programs exist for continued education regarding safety, laundry operations, pack processes, and other processes, Bloodborne Pathogens Exposure Control Training, etc.?

16 Note: HLAC's current standard's manual devotes an entire section that addresses facility and process elements unique to the presence of surgical pack assembly.

The Process

17 What is the facility's procedures and policies regarding the handling and collection of soiled health care textiles? Are these in accordance with relevant regulations?

18 Functional separation is key to the process: How does the provider maintain and ensure the separation of clean textiles from soiled textiles? This applies to carts, sort/wash/dry/finish areas and/or vehicles during handling, collection, and transportation of soiled textiles.

19 Likewise, what are the provider's procedures regarding cleaning and disinfecting in the use of carts, containers, covers, and liners to collect and transport

soiled textiles? Visually inspect their clean carts—are they free of visible soil on the outside and inside?

20 What are the precautions in place in the soiled sorting area?

21 Finding foreign objects in linens is a common occurrence. What are the provider's policies regarding these (e.g., reusable surgical instruments, sharps, etc.)?

22 What are the provider's processes regarding washing and extraction? Ask to see a titration report. Look for appropriate contact time, wash temperatures, and chemical concentrations.

23 How does the provider ensure that washed health care textiles become hygienically clean?

24 Make sure you get a full understanding of the provider's extracting and drying procedures to preserve the integrity of textiles, and to minimize microbial growth after washing and prepare for ironing and folding.

25 What are the processes in place regarding drying, finishing, folding, stacking, packaging, storage, and transport?

Lastly, while not part of the Three Ps per se, it's also smart to check references for a complete picture of how the provider performs on a continuing basis relative to its standards. ●

Gregory Gicewicz is board president of the Healthcare Laundry Accreditation Council and owner/operator of Sterile Surgical Systems, Tumwater, WA, a health care laundry and sterile surgical pack processor that serves customers in the Pacific Northwest.

“Informational signage should be everywhere. For example, regarding the handling of chemicals, is safety information and signage readily accessible to personnel?”

EXCHANGE 2015

2015 AHE RECOGNITION AWARDS

AHE Honors Award Winners at EXCHANGE 2015

By EXPLORE staff

We'd like to thank every one of our attendees, members, exhibitors, and sponsors for making EXCHANGE 2015 an unforgettable event. We hope you made many new friends, discovered new ways to improve your processes and efficiencies, and left the event as a refreshed, inspired, and newly motivated leader.



Mike Bailey, CHESP, pictured at EXCHANGE 2015, where he accepted the Phoenix Award for his service and contributions to AHE and the profession.

We would like to extend a special thank you to our sponsors and exhibitors for their support as EXCHANGE wouldn't be possible without them. We would like to also thank our attendees for making EXCHANGE 2015 a conference they budget for year after year due to the importance of the education and networking.

Mark your calendars now for EXCHANGE 2016, held in Pittsburgh, PA, September 25-28, 2016.

During EXCHANGE, AHE announced the recipients of the 2015 Recognition Awards for excellence in caring for the environment, volunteer service, mentorship, and environmental sustainability.

Phoenix Award

Sponsored by AF&S Products & Services, Inc.
The highest honor bestowed upon an AHE member, the Phoenix was presented to Michael Bailey, CHESP (pictured above), for his unparalleled and all-inclusive service and contributions to the advancement of every aspect of AHE, for exceptional leadership, and for demonstration of quality and excellence in the profession.

J. Owen Flynn Memorial Award

Sponsored by Wexford Labs
Robert Daigle, manager of Environmental Services, Wentworth-Douglass Hospital, was presented the J. Owen Flynn Memorial award for his service to his community as volunteer with local youth baseball and through his work in the United States.

Heart of Healthcare Award

Sponsored by Kimberly Clark Professional
Dorothy Huffman, environmental services lead tech, Mercy Health-Fairfield, was presented to the Heart of Healthcare Award for her dedication to quality work, supporting her team, and going the extra mile for patients and anyone else who comes across her path at her facility.

Environmental Services Department of the Year Award

The award recognizes and celebrates best practices in cleaning and caring for the environment. Both Northside Hospital (large hospital category winner) and Seton Medical Center (small hospital category winner) were honored with this year's award.

The following organizations were recognized with Certificates of Merit:

- University of Washington Medical Center (large)
- Specialty Hospital (small)
- Blanchard Valley Hospital (small)
- Huntsman Cancer Institute (small)

Innovation Award

AHE was pleased that the second year of the competition received 17 competitive submissions from industry leaders, including SCA; Aramark Uniform Services; Calderon Textiles, LLC; Clorox Professional Products Company; Curtain Care Plus; Hygiene Solutions, LLC; HSP USA, LLC; Hygiene; Daniels Healthcare; ImageFIRST Healthcare Laundry Services; Sealed Air Diversey Care; Infection Prevention Technologies; Karcher North America; MedTrainer; MIP, Inc.; P&G Professional; and Surface Medical, Inc.

Sealed Air Diversey Care's *SwingoBot 1650* was selected because its hands-free, robotic floor scrubbers that are programmed to maneuver the halls of a hospital demonstrated that they limit the spread of infection from floors, making the environment safer for patients and staff. It also enables environmental services staff to spend valuable time in detailing and other areas, improving overall productivity. Receiving honorable mentions are Clean20 (HSP USA, LLC) and Tytro Pro™ (P&G Professionals).

Additionally, the following companies were recognized for their support as participants in the AHE sponsorship program:

- PDI Healthcare—Corporate Champion (five years of sponsorship)
- STERIS Corporation (15 years of sponsorship)
- Wexford Labs, Inc. (10 years of sponsorship)



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— Published in PCT Magazine, June 2015



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ENHANCING PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE

An Interview with Jamie Cadenas, CHESP, and Dan Beaver, MBA, CHESP, CHFM



Jamie Cadenas, CHESP
Director of Operations
Jani-King of Phoenix

Cadenas currently holds the position of director of operations/healthcare services advisor for Jani-King of Phoenix. Her previous experience includes environmental services director, regional director, and operations manager, and her most recent professional accomplishment was successfully completing the AHE CHEST Train the Trainer certification course.



Dan Beaver, MBA, CHESP, CHFM
Aramark's Healthcare Sector
Regional Manager

Beaver has held various operations leadership positions and has a proven track record for driving HCAHPS performance, reducing bed turn times, as well as improving labor efficiency and employee engagement metrics. He also oversaw several successful Joint Commission surveys and managed large construction projects for facilities.

“The CHESP and work experience has opened career opportunities for me. It had helped me in promotions and scope of responsibility within my organization. —Dan Beaver”

Q How long have you been a member of AHE, and when did you become CHESP-certified?

Jamie: I rejoined AHE in 2011 with the support of my employer, and in July 2012 obtained the CHESP credential.

Dan: I have been a member of AHE since 2010 and became CHESP-certified that year as well.

Q What prompted or interested you in pursuing certification?

Jamie: A desire to test my knowledge of the industry and gain a better understanding of where I should be focusing my continuing education efforts.

Dan: I needed to establish credibility as a professional in the industry.

Q How did you prepare for certification? What was the hardest aspect in preparing to take the exam?

Jamie: I prepared for the test using the AHE study guide and took the practice test at the recommendation of colleague who had previously taken the exam and found the practice test to be an excellent preparation exercise for the actual exam.

Dan: I took the online preparation course and leveraged on-the-job experience. The most difficult aspect in preparation for the exam was balancing my time with work, family, and setting aside time to study.

Q What was your experience like in taking the exam?

Jamie: While the testing process is clearly explained prior to the examination, it was still a little nerve-wracking for me as this was my first time taking an exam at a testing center. I appreciated that results were provided at the completion of the test and there was not a lengthy waiting period to get the test results.

Dan: Full of nerves! Did I study the right material? Did I study enough? Do I know the material? Do I guess if I don't know the answer? A lot of worry for no reason. The online preparatory test and personal experience prepared me appropriately.

“
As a contract service provider, CHESP certification is a tool I use to demonstrate to my clients and prospective clients my knowledge of the industry.—**Jamie Cadenas**”

Q How did you feel after passing the exam and learning about your newly acquired certification?

Jamie: Accomplished!

Dan: Exhausted after the test. After I passed the certification, I was happy to know my professional knowledge was validated.

Q How has CHESP certification positively affected you and your role in your organization?

Jamie: Reinforcement to my employer the knowledge and experience I bring to our organization.

Dan: The CHESP certification has provided me with a professional certification that assists organizations as a “subject matter expert.”

Q How has CHESP certification affected your career and long-term career goals and path?

Jamie: As a contract service provider, CHESP certification is a tool I use to demonstrate to my clients and prospective clients my knowledge of the industry.

Dan: The CHESP and work experience has opened career opportunities for me. It had helped me in promotions and scope of responsibility within my organization. My professional goals include maintaining my CHESP certification.

Q What would you tell others who are considering pursuing certification? How should they best prepare?

Jamie: I would encourage those considering to just go for it! You have nothing to lose—only gain. Take the practice test so you can better gauge where you need to focus your studying efforts in preparation for the exam.

Dan: Just do it. We are always too busy to prepare. Set a personal goal, make time to prepare, and test. Understand the categories of the test.

Q What do you see in the future regarding certification for environmental services leaders?

Dan: Organizations will begin to make the certification a requirement. With the growing complexity of the environmental services leader position, organizations will look for leaders who have navigated through the industry and found ways to enhance the professional competence. ●

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C. diff...Seen Differently

The association between reusable sharps disposal and infection rates



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¹ This study was funded by BD and utilized independent data.

² Pogorzelska-Maziarz M. Relationship Between Sharps Disposal Containers and *Clostridium difficile* infections in Acute Care Hospitals. *Am J Infect Control*; July 28, 2015. Available at [http://www.ajicjournal.org/article/S0196-6553\(15\)00667-7/abstract](http://www.ajicjournal.org/article/S0196-6553(15)00667-7/abstract). Accessed August 25, 2015.

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10 Benefits of HLAC Accreditation



1 Independent Thinking



HLAC was formed in 2005 as a nonprofit, nonaligned organization charged with creating an independent third-party **inspection** and **accreditation** program to acknowledge that a laundry organization meets the highest standards for processing healthcare textiles. The voluntary Board of Directors comprises a cross section of objective experts in infection prevention, environmental services, laundry operations and government inspection.

2 Attention to Detail



The HLAC Accreditation Standards **document** covers the complete textile processing cycle: from handling and transporting to laundering and finishing to customer service. No other currently available accreditation program is as detailed or as comprehensive in scope as HLAC's. HLAC Accreditation Standards have been developed based on federal regulations and guidelines as well as best industry practices.

3 Standards That Are Nationally Recognized



Reinforcing the credibility and quality of HLAC standards, the HLAC Accreditation Standard document has been awarded the **AORN Seal of Recognition™** from the Association of periOperative Registered Nurses (AORN). This means the document has undergone thorough review by AORN and meets the guidelines of the "AORN Perioperative Standards and Recommended Practices."

4 Continuous Improvement



The dynamic nature of the HLAC Board ensures that accreditation standards are under constant review and continuous improvement. Revisions to the HLAC Accreditation Standards are released every three years after a public comment process.



5

An Accreditation Path That's Process Driven



The HLAC Accreditation Standards are clearly process-based and backed by data. This process-centered focus mirrors both ISO 9000 Series and FDA Part 820 Quality System Regulation recommendations. Process ensures that healthcare textiles are delivered in a condition that supports infection prevention initiatives and meet the CDC's and HICPAC's Guidelines for Environmental Infection Control in Healthcare.

6

A Role in Patient Safety



HLAC Accreditation Standards pay special attention to laundry processes directly related to **patient safety** and OSHA-required practices, including Bloodborne Pathogen Exposure Control Standards. As such, HLAC-accredited laundries can confidently claim they are part of the solution in the healthcare industry's effort to provide patients with the utmost in safe care.

7

An Extensive Inspection Process



To be accredited by HLAC, a laundry must pass HLAC inspection. Inspections place significant weight on factors such as design, equipment, practices, training, protocols and adherence to regulatory body requirements. The one-day inspection process includes a physical walk-through of the entire plant. Inspections follow HLAC standards. Passing inspection means a laundry's own operational processes adhere to professionally recognized infection prevention and control policies.

8

Good Company



All types of laundries – on-premises, co-op and commercial – are eligible for HLAC accreditation. Laundries that become accredited are in good company with other like-minded leaders in the industry. Meeting and maintaining HLAC Accreditation Standards means a laundry has made a commitment to a new level of excellence in the way it processes textiles. The laundries have the extra added asset of knowledge that their practices are the industry's best and most current available.

9

Customer Confidence



In the eyes of the healthcare customer, HLAC accreditation is like a dividend validating a laundry's expertise, believability, dependability, reliability and soundness.

10

A Competitive Edge



All of the benefits of HLAC accreditation give the healthcare laundry a competitive edge that enables it to crystallize and communicate to current and potential customers those specific qualities that make it different from non-accredited facilities.

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Patients count on you for their health and safety everyday. With Tork®, you can depend on no-touch dispensers that prevent the spread of infections and minimize cross-contamination. Our solutions also dispense products one-at-a-time so you can rest assured people won't touch the dispenser, only what they take.

With Tork, infection prevention is in your hands.



866-SCA-TORK | torkusa.com



Sustainability is in your hands

Experience less waste
with Tork systems.



A healthy environment goes beyond cleanliness and safety. It also means conserving resources and reducing your carbon footprint. With 100% recycled napkins and one-at-a-time dispensing, Tork® products and dispensers support your green efforts by reducing usage by 25%—guaranteed.*

With Tork, sustainability is in your hands.



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*In studies, when compared to traditional napkin dispensers, Xpressnap systems showed a reduction of usage from 25-50%.
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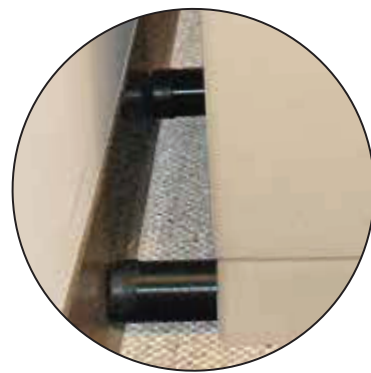
PROBLEM:

Step-on container lids scuff and scrape walls causing damage, poor public perception and repair costs.



SOLUTION:

WallGardian[™] Bumper Kits keep containers away from walls and lids from contacting painted or finished surfaces, preventing damage.



Rubbermaid Step-On Can	RCP Number	WallGardian Order Number	WallGardian [™] Bumper Kit Includes 2 Bumpers, Mounting Hardware, and Instructions
	6143	A614500W	
	6144		
	6145		
	614687	A614687W	
	6147		
	614787		

WallGardian[™] Bumper Kits fit popular styles of Rubbermaid step-on containers as well as similar competitive products. Bumper kits are designed to be retrofitted on-site.

Split Top Mobile Work Station



- ✔ **SPLIT TOP LOCKING WORK SURFACE**
- ✔ **LADDER HOLDER**
- ✔ **ADJUSTABLE TABLET HOLDER**
- ✔ **FLUORESCENT BULB CARTON HOLDER**
- ✔ **8" DIAMETER "NO FLAT" PNEUMATIC TIRES**



Upgrade and add versatility and functionality to the Rubbermaid TradeMaster[®] #4535-88 and #4533-88 Mobile Work Stations with a selection of innovative accessories engineered to make work easier and more efficient.

Download the full brochure at:
www.specialmade.com/splittop

SpecialMade is a value-added reseller of Rubbermaid Commercial Products.