

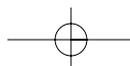
Tech talk: Instrument Management

In a Minute



Instrument management systems increase workflow for your customers.

How much valuable staff time are your accounts spending on non-patient-care-related activities, such as cleaning, sorting and even locating instruments? What do their patients think when they see instruments scattered on the tray next to them? (Is that an image that inspires confidence in the cleanliness, orderliness and efficiency of the practice?) Do your customers occasionally have to step out of the room during a procedure to find an instrument or replace a bent one? Do they blame you when they have to replace instruments prematurely, perhaps because those instruments got bent during the transporting, cleaning and sterilizing processes?



An instrument management system can help your customers increase the efficiency of their staff, optimize workflow and space, make a good impression on patients, and minimize the possibility of needle-sticks or instrument sticks in the office. And distributor sales reps can help dental practices identify the need for such a system, and exactly where to get assistance in implementing one.

Standardize processes

An instrument management system comprises not just products (instruments, cassettes, and processing supplies and equipment), but a commitment by the practice to standardize its processes. For example, the practice must decide what instruments will be used in each procedure, then set up those instruments in the cassette in exactly the same way (and in precisely the same order), procedure after procedure. This way, the dentist knows what to expect at chairside.

Upon completion of the procedure, the instruments must be returned to the cassette in the order in which they were stored, then transported to the cleaning unit. (Because the instruments are in an enclosed cassette, the potential for needle-sticks or instrument sticks during transport is minimized.) The cassette is immersed in the ultrasonic or placed in an automated dental washer, then rinsed. (Again, because the instruments are contained in a closed cassette, they will not get bent or dinged during the cleaning process.) The cassette is then wrapped in sterilization wrap or pouched (with appropriate indicators), labeled, and inserted into the sterilizer. After sterilization, the cassettes are stored with labels clearly visible.

When the cassette is needed for use, it is pulled. Some practices actually show the cassette to the patient before unwrapping it. In this way, the practice reinforces its orderliness, efficiency and cleanliness. With consumers' awareness of infection control at an all-time high, such messages are important.

Points to make

With predictability comes efficiency. At chairside, the dentist and staff know what instruments are at their disposal — and where they are located. Procedures are carried out smoothly and efficiently, and patients are confident in the process and the staff.

Hu-Friedy recommends that when speaking to your customers about instrument management systems, you ask these questions:

“Do you find that lack of instrument organization interrupts workflow and wastes your staff’s valuable time?”

An effective instrument management system forces the practice to organize its instruments, accessories and disposables prior to the procedure, for quick identification and access.

“Has a staff member had to excuse himself during a procedure in order to track down an instrument?”

A system brings reliability to your practice. The dentist has all the tools he needs at chairside to complete the procedure.

“Would you like to optimize the way you process instruments?”

An instrument management system helps the practice increase productivity by reducing time spent sorting and searching for instruments for processing.

“Is your practice in compliance with CDC guidelines on instrument reprocessing?”

An instrument management system facilitates compliance with CDC's instrument reprocessing guidelines, covering the following areas: receiving, cleaning, rinsing, drying, preparation and packaging, sterilization and storage.

“Is counter space at a premium in your processing area?”

By using cassettes, your practice reduces the amount of space needed to sort and package individual instruments.

“Would you like to minimize the potential for harmful needle-sticks among your staff?”

With an instrument management system, handling of contaminated sharps is minimized, and the potential for exposure to blood borne pathogens significantly reduced.

“Are you getting the maximum usage and life from your instruments?”

By storing instruments in an enclosed cassette, the practice reduces potential damage — such as breakage or bending — or misplacement. **[FI]**