

LAST WORD

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A supply delivery system that can streamline your case cart operation



Photo by David R. Roymer

Case cart systems have proven to be an efficient method of supply delivery in health care. They provide a means to ensure that the right instruments and supplies are available at the right time for the right procedure. In short, case carts save time. They improve service, and they have a positive impact on the bottom line. It is estimated that more than half of all health care facilities use some type of case cart system to provide an organized supply distribution system for the operating room (OR).

Benefits of an efficient system

to both providers and patients include the improved flow of goods to the OR, more standardized and improved infection control practices, enhanced worker productivity, reduced costs, better tracking of instruments and supplies, increased revenues, improved service to the OR and enhanced care for surgical patients. Cost savings can be realized as a result of reducing inefficiencies and increasing revenue due to increased productivity.

A well planned, developed and implemented case cart system involves several steps. The process begins with gathering relevant information and reviewing the data. A number of key factors including budget, physical layout and space, instrumentation, inventory and staffing should be addressed before establishing a case cart system.

This information is crucial to help ensure that sound decisions will be made and, if a decision is made to use case carts,

the system will work efficiently and effectively when implemented in your health care facility.

Critical steps

Effective communication, education and staff training can help promote acceptance of the case cart system and facilitate a smooth transition toward making the system work.

To achieve a successful outcome, input

from a multidisciplinary team, including physicians, OR nurses, sterile processing, materials managers and infec-

tion control, should be encouraged in the planning stages. Establishing an action plan with time frames will help keep everyone on track.

Several important decisions must be made during the process. One is whether the sterile processing staff will stock and distribute the case carts or if they will be stocked within the OR. Centralizing processing functions as well as inventory management in sterile processing will free the OR staff to focus on patient care and avoid costly duplication of duties.

It will be necessary to determine the design, construction, features and the number of case carts that will be needed. It is helpful to establish case cart performance criteria to help select the case cart system best suited to meet your individual health care facility's needs.

Both closed and open case carts are available in different sizes and construction and offer various features from which to

choose. A closed case cart will better secure and protect the contents and minimize the risk of environmental contamination. An open case cart will be less expensive and lighter in weight, but the cart will require a cover during transit. Evaluate the options, weigh the variables and set up trial cart evaluations to determine the appropriate case carts for your facility. Deciding this and ensuring carts are properly stocked can affect everything from inventory and infection control to patient care.

Take the time to analyze inventory and standardize products. Develop pick lists for the case carts and count sheets and tray assembly lists as necessary.

Along with effective oral communication, the case cart system will rely heavily on written policies and procedures. Develop well written policies and procedures for the proposed case cart system, as well as infection control techniques. When the case cart system is implemented, the policies and procedures will guide the operation and are essential to achieve the desired outcome.

Also, educate staff involved in the case cart supply distribution system. After implementing the case cart system, review and evaluate outcomes. Adjust inventory accordingly and revise pick lists and count sheets if necessary. Monitor the system on an ongoing basis for continuous quality improvement and the provision of a safe, efficient and cost-effective case cart supply distribution system. **MMHC**

An effective case cart system can yield many benefits to both health care providers and patients.

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