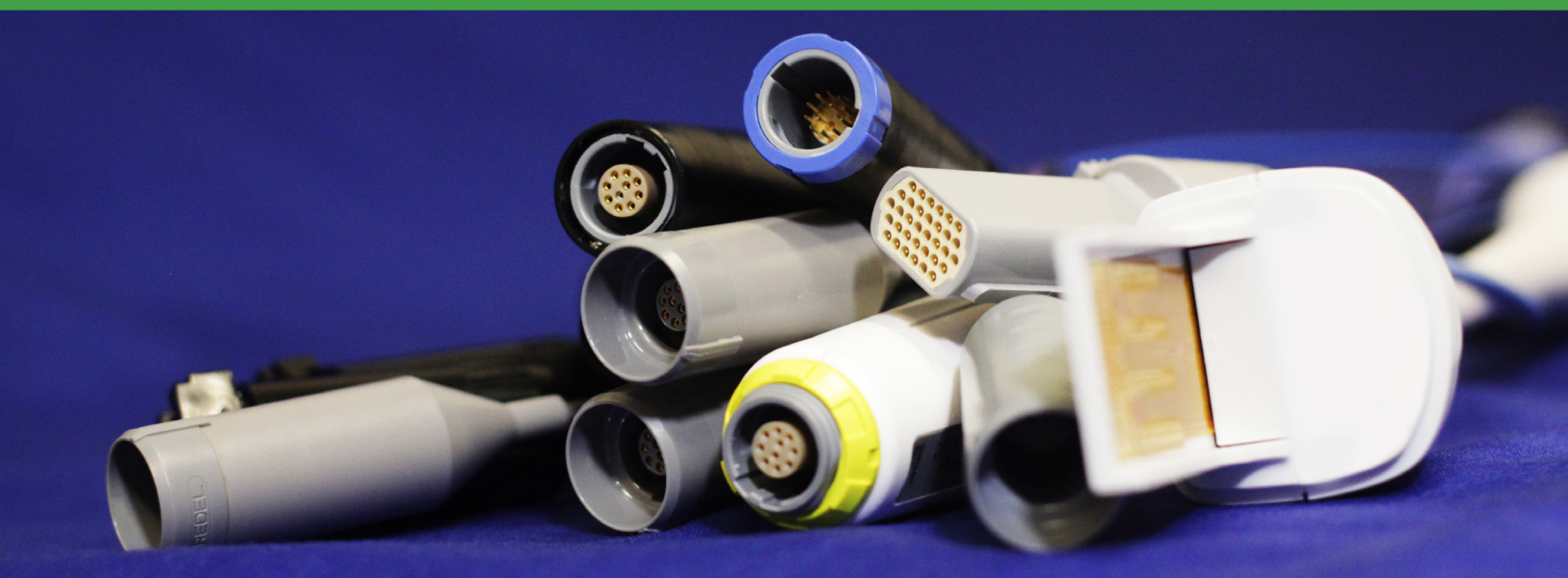
INNOVATIVE HEALTH

Frontiers in Medical Device Reprocessing

Innovative Health November 2022 Newsletter



Are You Testing your Electrophysiology Connector Cables With the Patient on the Table?

A lot of EP cables are used in each A-Fib procedure, and some hospitals still reprocess cables in their Central Sterile unit. This means staff never knows if the cables work or not, or if their use is Joint Commission compliant. Different cables come with different IFUs – and these can change over time. Therefore, cables must be accurately identified and the number of uses recorded. With Innovative Health cable reprocessing every cable is identified, cycle counted, cleaned and tested before a procedure – so the hospital is protected from exposure to the Joint Commission and State Health Authorities.

Supply Chain Resilience and Single-Use Devices

After the pandemic, government agencies, healthcare advocacy groups, and provider associations are focused on how to make the healthcare supply chain less environmentally harmful and more resilient. However, provider enforced standards largely address the symptoms of a vulnerable healthcare supply chain, and hospital leaders can go further in demanding that healthcare suppliers more fundamentally address the root causes of supply chain vulnerability: An expanded agenda should include resilience in product design and marketing. In a report published last month, the *Agency for Healthcare Research & Quality* specifically called out the preference for designing products for single use: "Reliance on single-use disposable medical supplies and devices not only leaves health systems vulnerable to supply chain disruptions [...], but they are frequently cited as containing higher life cycle emissions per use compared with equivalent application of reusable alternatives. Healthcare organizations should strongly encourage and facilitate resource stewardship." We made this clear in this MedCity News article: Designing devices for re-use remains a more resilient solution for supply disruption in healthcare devices. But until manufacturers consistently pursue this strategy, single-use device reprocessing can provide the benefits associated with a circular economy solution.

Innovative Health Leading the Way

In Healthcare Business Today Innovative Health was able to announce that we were the first US healthcare supplier to be fully engaged with the standards of the Healthcare Industry Resilience Collaborative, a non-profit healthcare supply chain trade association founded by providers and their trading partners to tackle resiliency issues for continuity of patient care. In addition to Innovative Health, HIRC's supplier membership includes nearly 80 leading medical supply providers, suppliers, and industry partners. HIRC Executive Director Jesse Schafer said that "Innovative Health recognizes the value of increased transparency and partnership in building supply chain optimization and reliability. Innovative Health is a valued ally and advocate of supply chain resiliency via their thought leadership and operating model."

Clinical Integration

For several months, Innovative Health's new team of Clinical Integration Specialists have been working with supply chain professionals, clinicians, and EP lab managers to increase the level of cost savings. Their focus on integrating clinical perspectives with purchasing practices and the operational aspects of reprocessing has been driving savings significantly among our hospital partners.

Reprocessing in Europe

In Europe, single-use device reprocessing is getting a lot of attention. The new regulatory system for reprocessed devices has had an impact, and scholars as well as governments are looking to reprocessing as a means to reduce costs and environmental impact. Innovative Health contributed along with NHS to a Life-Cycle Analysis (LCA), *Assessing long-term catheter remanufacturing emissions of an industry buy back scheme with Life Cycle Analysis*, by scholars at the University of Brighton led by Dr. Yan Wang, forthcoming in the journal *Processes*. This LCA confirms and solidifies results from previous studies that using a reprocessed device reduces carbon emissions by more than 50% versus a new device. Innovative Health also contributed to the article *Green Servitization in the Single-Use Medical Device Industry: How Device OEMs Create Supply Chain Circularity through Reprocessing*, published by Ornella Benedettini, University of Cambridge, in the journal *Sustainability*.

Greenwashing

Meanwhile, some manufacturers are using the environmental movement in Europe for greenwashing through the implementation of "recycling programs" in EP labs. Recycling is actually associated with HIGHER carbon emissions than if the EP devices were reprocessed: *Every time a catheter is recycled rather than reprocessed, the EP lab increases CO_2 emissions by almost 2 pounds*. In addition, of course, - whether by design or not – a reprocessable device that is recycled is taken out of the supply chain, contributing to supply chain shortages.

Reprocessing Beyond Cost Savings

Single-use device reprocessing has traditionally been associated with cost savings. Today, many EP labs across the country use reprocessing as a key supply chain strategy and save 100s of thousands of dollars every year. However, as a preeminent circular economy solution in healthcare, reprocessing also reduces carbon emissions and helps build a stronger, more resilient supply chain. Our whitepaper, Reprocessing Beyond Cost Savings, illustrates this and provides facts about the level of impact.

An Industry Stuck in an Echo Chamber

With the financial crisis in healthcare, many expected that the MedTech industry would turn to a different perspective on how they commercialize and sell new technologies: The upward price spiral simply is not sustainable for hospitals. Unfortunately, at least at Heart Rhythm Society's (HRS) 2022 Scientific Sessions, this was not the case. Rather, it was more of the same as prior years, with large, multinational technology companies launching new, more expensive devices, and physician leaders speaking into a great echo chamber populated by other physician leaders about new treatment approaches that they see rendering better results. The pandemic has made these discussions relevant beyond the industry, and their impact is being directly felt by the healthcare consumer. It is time to make healthcare technology costs a matter of public discourse, not simply something we leave to technologists and scientists.

Circular Economy Solutions and Reprocessing

Circular economy solutions are common in many industries, as seen in the reuse of soda bottles, retreading of truck tires, or the refurbishment of phones. In healthcare however, linear production-consumption models are pervasive, and as a result, healthcare is not only more expensive than it needs to be, but it is also responsible for more emissions than necessary. Policy makers in U.S. healthcare should pay attention to reprocessing as a circular economy solution in healthcare and mandate similar initiatives to respond to the need for cost reductions and carbon emission reductions. Healthcare facilities should expand their reprocessing programs and demonstrate good corporate citizenship while dramatically reducing costs to sustain quality of care.

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