



# INNOVATIVE HEALTH

Frontiers in Medical Device Reprocessing  
Innovative Health July 2023 Newsletter



## Heart Rhythm Society 2023 in New Orleans

Heart Rhythm Society's annual conference is the premier annual event for physicians, technologists, scientists, managers, and vendors associated with electrophysiology. This year, it was held in New Orleans, May 19-21. Proliferation of new technology, introductions to new procedural methodologies, study after study about patient outcomes and technology, and lots of remote monitoring are all staples of the Heart Rhythm Society conference. [It's all about technology, and the economics are rarely addressed.](#) See Rick Ferreira, CEO of Innovative Health, talk about the conference [here](#). This year's conference, in most ways, was no different from other years: large MedTech companies launching new technologies and long sessions about breakthroughs in technology and methodology to treat patients with atrial fibrillation and other heart conditions. Electrophysiology is no longer a new area of clinical treatment, but the MedTech companies are not slowing down their rapid pace of new technology development: Every year, every big technology company has a new revolution to introduce.

## Poster Presentation About AFib Reimbursement and Reprocessing

However, the dialogue about electrophysiology at HRS is changing, even if only a little bit. There were more posters and discussions about the economics of reprocessing, something that has historically been rare. This year, Innovative Health had [submitted a poster](#) for presentation, and it was accepted. We got to present about how single-use device reprocessing can reduce the cost of devices used in electrophysiology procedures, and our poster presentation garnered a lot of attention and interest. Using reprocessed devices instead of new ones in the Electrophysiology lab can reduce costs per atrial fibrillation procedure by 30% or more than \$3,000. This reduces the device cost burden on reimbursement from 45% to 31%. This equates to more than \$450,000 per year for a lab that does 140 AFib ablations. See the [brief study](#) presented by Innovative Health at Heart Rhythm Society 2023 last month in New Orleans. Innovative Health's abstract can also be found [here](#) (PO-03-180).

## Supply Chain Resilience

The Healthcare Industry Resilience Collaborative ([HIRC](#)) continues to shine a light on practices in the healthcare supply chain that reduces the ability of healthcare providers to provide proper and timely care. And the Collaborative is defining new standards and certifies these months. In the Fall, Innovative Health became the first US healthcare supplier to be [fully engaged with HIRC's standards](#), and in April, Innovative Health became the first supplier to [receive HIRC's transparency badge](#). At Innovative Health, we believe the [HIRC standards and the transparency badge](#) represent an absolute minimum level of resilience that suppliers should demonstrate to even be considered for contracting. They address the symptoms of a vulnerable healthcare supply chain, but HIRC and the healthcare industry should go further and address the root causes of supply chain vulnerability, and among these specifically a MedTech industry whose technology design and marketing activities daily cause backorders and cancelled procedures. [We can start with single-use devices and marketing practices.](#)

## The Healthcare Waste Challenge

US healthcare facilities are struggling with very basic problems in its supply rooms: Products are expiring on the shelves, recalled products are not identified and removed, unrealistic par levels cause over-buying – and the means of solving these problems is usually time-consuming, labor-intensive manual audits, an approach that is inherently inaccurate. Patient safety is in jeopardy and hospital finances are in bad shape. Single-use devices are abundant in labs and operating rooms across hospital service lines, creating massive amounts of waste, unnecessarily increasing costs, and causing thousands of pounds of carbon emissions. In short: [US hospitals have a waste problem](#). “What is needed is a mind shift to think about healthcare supplies as assets rather than disposable items,” write Cassandra Thiel, PhD, Assistant Professor at New York University School of Medicine and Daniel J. Vukelich, Esq., President of the association, Medical Device Reprocessors in [Managed Healthcare Executive](#). “To ensure the best outcomes possible for healthcare workers and patients, we must urgently identify ways to use medical supplies more efficiently. ...the time has come for hospitals to reduce and reuse what they can to create necessary resiliency and capacity in the supply chain.”

## The European Heart Rhythm Association (EHRA)

At the annual conference of the European Heart Rhythm Association (EHRA), physicians spoke about their grave concern that the environmental footprint of EP procedures needs immediate attention. Dr. Josselin Duchateau from Haut-Leveque Hospital in Pessac, France said, “We need to take this problem and change it right now, and make a technical environment that must strive for sobriety. This is the only way that we’ll be able to treat all the patients we want. The alternative – if we don’t do that, if we’re unable to do that – is that we will have to select the patients that receive treatment, because we won’t have enough for everyone.” Reprocessing as a circular healthcare economy solution reduces the environmental footprint of healthcare, but circular healthcare economy solutions go beyond this and effectively address health equity – or [the reach of our best medical procedures](#) throughout the patient population.

## Reprocessing Technology

Innovative Health increasingly reprocesses complex devices, and as devices become more complex, reprocessing technology must evolve to be able to reprocess, test and inspect in new and innovative ways. Watch how Innovative Health removes and [re-applies Hydrophobic coating](#) from certain catheters, especially catheters used in the cardiac cath lab. You can also see how novel technology allows us to [verify the accuracy of the location sensor](#) that is embedded in certain electrophysiology devices. The location sensor is not impacted by the reprocessing process, but Innovative Health still verifies that it works as intended.

## The Cost of Single-Use Devices and Ever-Increasing Prices

US hospitals are under such financial pressure that their situation in many cases is unsustainable. Every month, we read about another hospital losing 100s of millions of dollars, we read about more hospital closures. The cost of the newest technology and the ultra-thin operating margins of most hospitals is a primary driver of this, and recently, labor costs have made the situation worse. Overreliance on expensive single-use devices is responsible not only for environmental harm, but also for the high costs of

procedures. As a society, we read about this all the time, but we need to start addressing the challenges – and here is why: The high cost of single-use devices and ever-increasing prices is not just a problem affecting hospital CEOs. When technology becomes too expensive, hospitals shut down service lines and cannot provide certain types of service to their patients. Healthcare’s cost problems are ultimately patient access problems. Healthcare NOW Radio’s “Trending Now” [podcast](#) with Innovative Health is about the unsustainable situation for US healthcare and how our infatuation with expensive, new single-use device causes both costs and carbon emissions to go up.

## Challenges in Hospital-Based Reprocessing

When it comes to sterile processing (SP), location matters, whether it is on-site, off-site, or centralized to one location. Inadequate space, limited instrument and device inventories, cost pressures, staffing issues, compliance failures—these are just some of the reasons why health systems and hospitals are reassessing their SP department structures and sites. Healthcare Purchasing News ran [a piece about this topic](#) in their June issue: “Shifting strategies and sites for reprocessing success”. The journal asked Innovative Health to provide some insights. We have seen more devices labeled “reusable” being reissued under the “single-use” label, which adds complexity to on-site hospital reprocessing. These products obviously need to be moved from on-site reprocessing to reprocessing by a company that has FDA clearance to reprocess. Also, many reusable products are being moved off-site as well. Hospitals are increasingly recognizing that SP’s limitations can mean Joint Commission requirements are compromised if reusable devices are reprocessed on-site.

## Political Push to Reduce Environmental Impact of Healthcare

As part of their “[Key Actions to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions by U.S. Hospitals and Health Systems](#),” the National Academy of Medicine encourages health systems to “optimize reprocessing as allowed per FDA regulations.” Other recommendations include switching from single-use to reusable materials more generally, and reducing overall single-use plastics by, for example, 10% per year. Last year, the White House and the Department of Health and Human Services [launched a health sector climate pledge](#), committing to climate resilience and reducing emissions. Organizations that join volunteer to cut their greenhouse gas emissions by 50% by 2030 and achieve net zero emissions by 2050. So far, 116 organizations have signed on, including more than 15% of U.S. hospitals. On July 20, Modern Healthcare will host a webinar on “[Addressing healthcare’s impact on the climate crisis](#).” The webinar will advise healthcare organizations on how to implement and execute an environmental sustainability strategy, best practices and challenges to achieving environmental sustainability, and strategies to partner with internal and external stakeholders to realize carbon neutral goals. Single-use device reprocessing is a great place to start.

