



Sustainable Technologies™
A Cardinal Health business

Best practices for a sustainable future

A major cancer center and Sustainable Technologies collaborate to maximize medical device reprocessing by reducing waste and costs

Creating a culture of sustainability

For one major cancer center, advancing sustainable healthcare is a top priority. So, it was among the first to develop best practices for reducing environmental impact while improving staff satisfaction and lowering costs.

These best practices are organized within a sustainability program framework that includes climate action and resilience, energy management and waste management/reduction. "With this framework, we track KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) that help us understand costs, anticipate future conditions and unlock value adds that drive resiliency," said the cancer center's sustainability program leader.

A key waste management/reduction initiative is the cancer center's medical device reprocessing program.



"Our sustainability efforts support the medical mandate to do no harm. Sustainability is healthcare."

Sustainability Program Leader

The value of reprocessing

The cancer center implements an ongoing, enterprise-wide initiative to manage waste, reduce downstream impacts and improve environmental health and safety. "We promote zero-waste policies and more sustainable disposal options," the program leader said. "That includes gaining additional use from supplies through reprocessing."

The cancer center diverts approved single-use, high-volume supplies to dedicated collection bins for refurbishment at or above OEM (Original Equipment Manufacturer) specifications. Then, the cancer center re-purchases reprocessed supplies at a discount. "This aligns well with our goal of reducing costs without impacting patient care," the program leader said.

Another advantage is strengthening the supply chain by combining reprocessed products with OEM to help ensure availability. "One of the principles of supply chain sustainability is to manage perpetual inventory based on par levels and safety stock," the cancer center's supply chain business analyst said. "By flattening out demand and using stock up to expiration, we reduce waste, lower costs and support our overall sustainability goals. Reprocessing supports these goals."



"Reprocessing creates a more resilient supply chain."

Supply Chain Business Analyst

Expanding reprocessing

To broaden and drive further success with reprocessing, the cancer center began collaborating more than five years ago with Sustainable Technologies, a Cardinal Health business. “We chose Sustainable Technologies because they’re well integrated with our current sourcing, and we can leverage their rebate potential for items returned for reprocessing,” the program leader said. “We also unlock some low-hanging fruit for buying reprocessed supplies at a discount,” such as SpO2 sensors, lead wires and compression devices for deep vein thrombosis (DVT) and pulmonary embolism (PE) sleeves.”

To gain approval to proceed, the program leader leveraged the cancer center’s OR environmental impact committee, which had been operating for more than a decade and includes stakeholders in nursing, perioperative and surgery. “Then we leveraged our existing sustainability infrastructure for implementation — standardizing the Sustainable Technologies™ Program everywhere,” the program leader said.



Increasing collections

To launch the program, the team mapped the cancer center’s facilities to determine where eligible item usage is greatest. Then, located collection bins there for pickup without disrupting patient care.

Best practices for launching and maintaining awareness:

- ✓ Staff presentations
- ✓ Standardized signage on the collection bins
- ✓ Intranet content
- ✓ Reminders within other waste management and sustainability efforts
- ✓ Leveraging broader environmental awareness events such as Earth Month



Tracking results

“To maximize environmental impact and rebates, our goal is a 100% match between usage and collections,” the cancer center’s supply chain business analyst said. The center uses RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) technology to collect product usage data, and Sustainable Technologies provides reprocessing data monthly. To aggregate and analyze the data, the cancer center created a Reprocessing Dashboard.

The difference in usage vs. reprocessed items reveals opportunities for improvement. “We see the rebates received and rebate potential, had we collected 100% of items used,” the program leader said.

Monthly results are reported to the OR environmental impact committee. If the usage vs. collections gap widens, the cancer center dives into the data to help determine the cause. For example, have the collection bins been moved? Has there been significant staff turnover? “These insights flag optimization opportunities before the gap gets too wide.”



“Cardinal Health is a very trusted name and we’ve had success collaborating with their supply management team. So it seemed like a natural fit.”

Sustainability Program Leader



Staff volunteers champion success

More than 375 cancer center volunteers help promote and expand the Sustainable Technologies Program, answer questions and drive successes.

Launching your own sustainability program

What advice would the cancer center’s program leader give to other hospitals and healthcare systems that want to start or expand reprocessing efforts? “Don’t overcomplicate things,” he said. “Everyone generates waste, so it’s already very visible. Start with other waste management programs you already have, such as recycling or landfill diversion. Then make medical device reprocessing one of these core programs.” To make a good business case for deployment, be sure to highlight waste and cost reduction. “It’s just smart business.”

Best practices:

- ✓ Select a group of approved single-use devices for diversion
- ✓ Locate collection bins in high-usage areas
- ✓ Standardize deployment, so you see the same bins and signage everywhere
- ✓ Train staff and communicate constantly
- ✓ Set goals to monitor and drive improvement
- ✓ Track progress via data-driven metrics — or even start qualitatively, such as maximizing the presence of collection bins in high-usage areas. Then leverage the monthly Sustainability Value Reports to establish metrics for tracking and improving collections.

“Don’t kick the program off and then put it on autopilot. You won’t have the same success as this cancer center,” said Andrew Basque, Sustainable Technologies Consultant for Cardinal Health. “If you don’t already have a dedicated sustainability team, an internal champion is a great place to start. The more internal advocacy you grow — with the support of Sustainable Technologies — the more successful you’ll be.”



Sustaining success

What’s next for the reprocessing program? “Our dashboard will continue to become an expanding source of data to be even more precise with our perpetual inventory strategy,” the supply chain business analyst said.

“We’re working on opportunities to purchase even more reprocessed products, and Sustainable Technologies has been essential in expanding our collection efforts throughout our regional network,” the program leader added.

In this cancer center’s quest for zero waste, the future has never looked brighter.

To learn more: Email gogreen@cardinalhealth.com or visit sustainabletechnologies.com



Create a culture of sustainability

- Plan and set goals
- Execute and review annually
- Amplify successes
- Be visible and engage
- Teach staff how to be involved, without disrupting day-to-day work



The three Es

Evaluate: Define needs and tailor model

Execute: Install bins, train staff and begin collections

Engage: Maximize sustainability and savings via ongoing training and support

Thank you for making a difference
for your staff, patients and the environment

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