Streamline the work and collaboration on the next challenge.

Background

A problem in need of a solution:-

- Perioperative nurses are almost 50% more at risk of sharps injury when compared to other health care workers[1].
- Every sharps injury carries the risk of acquiring a potentially life threatening blood borne disease such as hepatitis B, C or HIV.
- A sharps injury can have physiological, psychological and financial impacts on the injured and their family.
- Recognised as being one of the significant occupational hazards faced by healthcare workers every day, any reduction to the rate of sharps injury would have significant and wide ranging benefits in the health sector.

Method

Problem brief

We adopted a formal process to describe and document the problem. It was important for us not to jump into solving the problem before we fully understood it and the environment in which it occurred.

Investigation

- Study of the perioperative environment and the process.
- Literature reviews.
- Discussions with scrub nurses, surgeons and infection control staff.
- Observation and time/motion study across a range of procedures.

Development

The solution considered the findings, evaluated the causes and assessed the options. It aimed to help and protect scrub nurses and other staff in theatre.

The early engagement with the perioperative nurses and their NUM’s provided the clarity needed to identify the causes and simplify the development process.

Discovery

- The threat of sharps injury remains a distressing reality for perioperative nurses.
- Scrub nurses are the central player in the operating theatre and can have the most influence on reducing sharps injury.
- The operating room is a high risk area for sharps injury due to handling a large number of sharps devices, in confined space and under pressure.
- The facilities, process and devices currently available to the scrub nurse have not kept pace with the complexities of the modern operating procedures. Devices like kidney dishes are still used for performing a role they are not suited to and place the scrub nurses, surgeons and other staff at risk of sharps injury.
- Any initiative to minimise risk in theatre would need to involve the scrub nurses, be intuitive in nature, help the nurses performing their role more safely, effectively and efficiently.

Results

The various risks contributing to sharps injury in the operating theatre were identified and a suite of complementary measures were designed to minimise them.

The proposed initiatives are easily explained, easily implemented and intuitive to adopt. They can be implemented independently of one another. Each benefits the scrub nurse by minimising the risk of sharps injury and maximising their efficiency.

The Team

Shocks Injury Can Transmit

HIV

Hepatitis C

Conclusions

- Reducing sharps injury in theatre can be achieved through a few simple and complimentary changes. The changes also help the scrub nurse:
  - Improve efficiency
  - Maintain order through the procedure
  - Improve the safety from sharps injury for everyone in theatre
- Innovating through collaboration may be the best way to solve problems and help health workers perform their duties in a more efficient and safe way, improve the level of patient care and for hospitals to benefit from the resulting efficiencies.
- Collaboration and innovation is practical and rewarding.

References