

Dramatically Improving Inventory Management in the Operating Room

Billings Clinic automates manual processes with OptiFlex Surgical Services Supply Chain System



BILLINGS CLINIC, BILLINGS, MONTANA

THE CHALLENGE

Billings Clinic did not have a good way to manage supply inventory in the ORs. “We had overstocks, we ran out of items, and there were plenty of mischarges,” said Jalea Franzen, Clinical Coordinator for the OR.

Nurses charged items manually on the preference card by marking down which items were used during the case. This information then had to be input by clerical staff for billing. The process was not only time consuming, but it also left plenty of room for error.

THE SOLUTION

Recognizing that automation could offer a solution to these issues, the Director of OR looked at Omnicell’s OptiFlex™ Surgical Services Supply Chain System—software that automates physician preference cards and serves as a perpetual inventory management system.

The OptiFlex system is being used in 10 operating rooms at Billings Clinic. One of the deciding factors in choosing to implement the system was the way it managed the preference card system.

BEFORE OPTIFLEX

- Manual tracking of items used per case and data entry post case delayed inventory decrements
- Charging system was inadequate and inaccurate
- Warehouse staff made multiple trips to replenish inventory

AFTER OPTIFLEX

- Charge capture increased well over \$1 million a year
- Missing inventory of \$300,000–\$400,000 per year down to almost zero
- Labor savings of 5,000 to 7,000 hours per year
- End-of-year inventory process down from several days to just 3 hours
- Replenishment time reduced from 1–2 days to just 2–3 hours

“Having what you need when you need it—that’s crucial for patient safety. Everything we do is for the patient, and this system really helped with that.”

Jalea Franzen
Clinical Coordinator for the OR

Improved Preference Card Management

With the OptiFlex system, the preference card is automated and integrates with the inventory system. A unique bar code is assigned for each surgical case based on the physician, procedure, and patient. The system completes an inventory management loop in real time. As items for each case are used, they are automatically charged to the patient, decremented, and inventory is reordered the same day.

“This reduces inventory and overhead costs,” said Franzen. “The system also gives the OR nurses confidence that they’ll have the items they need when they need them.” She added, “There’s a huge positive in how the nurse can use OptiFlex in the room. It’s very easy to modify the preference card and do their charging.”

Everything in Its Place

Billings Clinic owes its ongoing success with OptiFlex to the team that formed during the implementation project consisting of super users from different parts of the OR. In implementing OptiFlex, it made sense for Billings Clinic to reorganize their central core OR supply inventory. In line with their lean management principles, this model of having one place to pick from and return to has decreased total pick time and increased inventory accuracy.

“Our warehouse staff has it much easier now, and less time is wasted traveling to and from the ORs,” said Steve Smith, Value Analysis Data Coordinator for Supply Chain Operations.

Now, instead of doing a manual count in the OR areas and then returning to the warehouse to pull the needed items, they receive an electronic requisition that accurately reveals the inventory on hand so they can pick the items first and bring them to the central core.

“We no longer have nurses spending time chasing inventory and manually marking up preference cards for charges, and other inefficiencies in our old process,” said Melodie Milroy, OR Business Manager.

Learn more about the OptiFlex Surgical Services Supply Chain System and other supply management solutions at www.omnicell.com.