President’s Message

Colorful pansies and daffodils, warm sunny weather, and sandy beaches with the relaxing sound of the waves, ... I am ready for spring! Thankfully it is time to start thinking about loading up and going to Myrtle Beach.

I can’t believe that this year has passed so quickly. It seems like only yesterday that I was the new President-Elect, and soon I will be the Past President. This has been a year of learning and challenge. As I stated in my first “President’s Message”, writing is not a strength of mine, and this is still the case. However, writing the articles for the web and Steamline has been challenging to me, and rewarding since I thought I would probably be getting a ghost writer to do my articles.

It has been an honor to serve as your President, and to learn so much from you. I would like to thank you for this great opportunity in life. Also, I want to thank each member of the Board of Directors for all the help and support they have given. I could not have done it without all of you!

As we press forward, remember that this is your organization and it depends on you for its success. We have set the standard in the past, and we can and will set it in the future. With your help and support we will continue to be the premier organization of the ASHCSP!

See you at the beach!

Margie Morgan, CRCST
President

Margie Morgan, CRCST

President
Upon completion of this in-service the reader (1) will be able to identify the factors that impact shelf life. (2) List sterility assurance measures to prolong shelf life, and (3) describe steps necessary to implement an event related sterility program.

The definition of Event Related Sterility is simply stated, “A package is considered sterile until some event makes it unsterile”, in other words, contaminated.

Packaging materials played an important role in the consideration for how long a sterilized package would remain sterile sitting on a shelf. Muslin wrappers were at the center of a Centers for Disease Control study regarding shelf life in the early 1970’s. The results of these studies showed that items wrapped in double layers of muslin had a shelf life of three weeks, while items placed into a dust cover were sterile up to nine months. Improvements in packaging materials and knowledge of what impacts shelf life have greatly improved our acceptance of event related sterility.

The factors that effect shelf life as we have stated are obviously the packaging materials and it’s susceptibility to tearing, puncture, crushing, compromised closures or seals and ability to shed moisture. Third generation fabrics with cotton / poly blends have replaced muslin as a reusable wrapper of choice. Rigid container systems provide greater protection than wrappers but still must allow the sterilant into and out of the container. That is the weak point of the containers design. The filter and / or seal are the openings to allow sterilant penetration, but if compromised also allow contamination.

The storage conditions that a sterile package is kept, plays a role in prolonging or maintaining sterility. These storage conditions include the environmental hygiene of the area, the number of air exchanges, the temperature and humidity, movement of personnel within the storage space and open or closed shelving all play a role in keeping our products sterile. Never use aerosols around sterilized packages.

You can enhance the package shelf life by rotating stock using the FIFO (First In, First Out) principal. This will help minimize the number of times that a package may be handled while being stored on a shelf.

Why spend all of our time and energy and resources to make a package sterile then mishandle the package right out of the sterilizer. The handling of a package is another factor that plays a role in shelf life. Under the best-case circumstances a package is handled first when it is removed from the sterilizer cart. Second, when being placed on the case cart or supply cart and third when it is handled and opened for use. We all can identify many more times when a package is handled. Just give it some thought. How many times have you picked up a package then decided it was not what you wanted? Had an item being returned to your shelf after being “pulled” for a case? What happened to that package while it was away from your control?

Wrapped packages need to be picked up off a shelf. Dragging a package over the edge of the shelf will damage the wrapper. Dropping a wrapped package, stacking packages one on top of another causes compression of the lower packages. Carrying a package against one’s body allows body soils to be introduced to the packaging materials.

AAMI and AORN both have statements related to the sterility of a package being event related. The current JCAHO manual (Comprehensive Accreditation Manual for Hospitals, Update 4, November 2004) has no reference to shelf life or expiration dating but previous versions stated that hospitals should establish shelf life to be time or event related.

For control purposes we continue to label our packages with a load and lot number. This unique number identifies for the reader, the date in the form of a Julian date, sterilizer and load that the package was sterilized. This unique identifier allows for the rotation of stock, and for the recall in the event of a sterilization failure.

Using event related sterility minimizes the necessity to reprocess the outdates on the first of the month. The packages still need to be examined for integrity and signs of soil or water damage every time the package is handled. Savings are achieved in labor costs and packaging materials.
Event Related Sterility is a concept that a sterile package is more a victim of its environment than the clock. Commercially sterilized products have a label that either lists an expiration date or has a statement similar to “the contents of this package are sterile until opened or damaged”. If a package bears both an expiration date and the aforementioned statement, the expiration date has nothing to do with sterility maintenance, it is the product's viability. In other words, something in the product will begin to break down and may fail during use.

To implement an event related sterility shelf-life program we must first establish our policies for acceptable storage conditions and enforce their adherence. The objective of any storage area is to preserve the integrity of the package contents until time of use.

Ideal conditions will help prolong the shelf life of our products. The ideal conditions are a temperature of 64°F (18°C) to 72°F (22°C) to a high end of 75°F (26°C), minimum of four air exchanges per hour, controlled relative humidity of 35 to 75 percent. Fire codes usually dictate that the item should not be stored any closer to the sprinkler heads than 18” (45.72cm). The distance from the floor should be 8 (20.32cm) to 10”(25.4cm) and 2” (5.08cm) from the walls. The area should have limited access and general traffic flow should be at a minimum. This storage area should have a positive airflow relative to adjacent public and decontamination areas. General housekeeping and area hygiene should include at least daily cleaning of floors and horizontal work surfaces. Other surfaces, such as walls and storage shelves, should be cleaned on a regularly scheduled basis and more often if needed.

The general attire of the staff working in the storage area should be clean surgical attire. Attire should be changed daily or more often as needed (i.e., when wet, grossly soiled, or contaminated) and, if reusable, should be laundered by the laundry facilities used by the health care institution for other surgical textiles. Clean shoes, to be worn only in the hospital and a head cover to cover the hair completely should be worn while in the storage area.

The second step would be to establish acceptable packaging materials and their relationship to prolonging shelf life. The use of rigid containers and dust covers will enhance shelf life. Written policies need to be established to include statements regarding the suitability of the packaging material for the cycle and method (is the material compatible with the sterilization process?, does it allow the sterilant to enter the package then be removed?); strength of the package (will it resist tears, puncture, temperature and humidity changes without changing the integrity of the material?); type of packaging (e.g., reusable woven or single-use non-woven textile wrapper, paper /plastic pouch, rigid container); package integrity properties and the ability to present to a sterile field.

Present the information to your Infection Control Committee. You always want to have the approval of this committee whenever you are making a process change. Your Infection Control Practitioner is your best ally to bring about change.

Identified obstacles to implementing event-related sterilization. One author lists the following 10 challenges:
1. Overcoming resistance to change.
2. It takes too much time and effort to change.
3. How to work with state or local laws that still require expiration dates on hospital packages.
4. The hospital isn't comfortable with its storage practices.
5. Gaining control over transportation and handling procedures.
6. Uncertainty about whether packaging material will hold up in event-related sterility environments.
7. Fear of problems with the Joint Commission.
8. Writing a policy takes time and knowledge about the new system.
9. Establishing an effective labeling system.
10. Uncertainty about how long it will take to convert to an event-related sterility maintenance program.

Hospitals that have implemented a successful event related sterility program began with:
- “a written event-related sterility assurance policy that clearly outlines the subject, objective, policy statement, and procedures.
- Consider all labor and materials involved and conduct a cost/benefit study to help educate those involved about the immediate payback if they incorporate this change.
- Present the written policy and cost/benefit analysis to your Infection Control committee for approval. Some monitoring suggestions to include are “first in/first out” stock rotation,

- Present the written policy and cost/benefit analysis to your Infection Control committee for approval. Some monitoring suggestions to include are “first in/first out” stock rotation,
periodic culturing of packs to verify sterility, and ongoing review of the hospital’s infection rates.
- Following approval, document all related details in a memo to staff members and related personnel to begin their training. Meet with anyone expressing concerns about the new procedures immediately, and be responsive to what they say. Make yourself accessible and keep meeting and talking to staff members until the objections and concerns are resolved.
- Implement the new procedures with all personnel, including volunteers, who use or handle sterile items. Impress upon each person their responsibility of carrying out effective quality control procedures by inspecting each package carefully for damage or signs of tampering prior to the point of use.
- Give timely, positive oral and written feedback to each individual who has been trained in event-related sterility assurance to emphasize the cost and time savings achieved."

The implementing of an event related sterility program will save monies, in both supplies and staff time, without jeopardizing the safety and quality of the products that we prepare. It requires changing the “...we have always done it that way” approach to how we look at the way we prepare, handle and store our products.

For Additional Reading


POST TEST – Event Related Sterility

1. A definition of Event Related Sterility is “a package is considered sterile until some event makes it unsterile.”  T  F
2. Packaging material has a determining factor in prolonging shelf life.  T  F
3. Studies have shown that items wrapped in muslin have an indefinite shelf life.  T  F
4. The weak point of rigid container design is the filter and / or seal.  T  F
5. Every time the package is handled it needs to be examined for integrity and signs of soil or water damage.  T  F
6. Commercially sterilized products must have a label that lists an expiration date.  T  F
7. The objective of any storage area is to preserve the integrity of the package contents until time of use.  T  F
8. The storage area should have a negative airflow relative to adjacent public and decontamination areas.  T  F
9. The general attire of the staff working in the storage area should be clean surgical attire.  T  F
10. The use of rigid containers and dust covers has no effect on shelf life.  T  F

EVALUATION – Please evaluate this in-service by selecting a rating between 0-4.
0= Not Applicable, 1= Poor, 4= Excellent

Authors Knowledge of the Subject 0 1 2 3 4
Authors Presentation, Organization, Content 0 1 2 3 4
Authors Methodology, Interesting/Creativity 0 1 2 3 4
Program Met Objectives 0 1 2 3 4

Please Note - Answer key will be in the next issue of the “Steamline”
To receive 1.0 Contact Hours toward re-certification from CBSDP, complete the in-service “quiz” after reading the article. Send the entire page with the completed “quiz” to:

Lana Haecherl
P.O. Box 568
Pineville, NC 28134

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If you are NOT a member of NCAHCSP please include a $15 fee, $20 for out of state, before a certificate will be issued. Your fee will provide you with a 1-year membership in the Association and consequently entitle you to submit the next in-service offerings for the cost of a postage stamp. That’s potentially six in-services for your registration fee.

CBSDP will allow us to give CEU credit for this in-service for one year after publication. Please be aware that this inservice will end in April 2010.

Print your name CLEARLY, as you want it to appear on the certificate. Enter the address where you want the certificate to be sent.

Name: ____________________________________________________________
Street: ____________________________________________________________
City ________________________ State Zip _____________________________
May 5-6, 2005
Plan to attend the next meeting to be held on May 5th and 6th at the Ocean Dunes Resort in Myrtle Beach. Our program will include topics such as “So You Want A Custom Tray” by Billy Lander from Tri State and Sterilizer Preventive Maintenance” with Peter Walczak of Sterilizer Refurbishing Service, Deborah Haley from Vanguard Medical Concepts of Lakeland FL presenting “The Multiple Benefits of a Medical Device Reprocessing Program” and We have also scheduled Sandra Benfeild of NorthEast Medical Center as our inspirational / motivational speaker for the closing session. Don’t forget the Vendor Exposition on Wednesday and the Annual Golf Tournament on Tuesday at the Myrtlewood Golf Club.

The cut-off date for reservations is April 3, 2005.

Our next meeting in Winston-Salem will be on August 12th, 2005. The first session speaker will be sponsored by Linvatec who handles power equipment such as the Hall Series of power equipment. The presentation will be on cleaning and handling of the power equipment. The afternoon session will feature Captain Warren who will speak on Identity Theft. Captain Warren has presented to our membership in the past and is very enlightening.

Have a suggestion for a newsletter in-service?
Better yet, submit an in-service and if we use what you have submitted as a newsletter in-service, you will earn a free registration to a quarterly meeting.

Submissions need to be original work, about a current CS topic, approximately 1,800 words and include a 10 question post test and references. Do not worry about being perfect, we will help you with editing. Please submit your in-service in electronic form to any member of the editorial board listed on the first page..

Recipe for your busy lifestyle: Sizzling Scallops – submitted by Paul Hess from Marlene Hieronymus - Hieronymus Seafood, Wilmington, NC

1 pound sea bay scallops
½ cup minced yellow onion
½ cup dry white wine
2-3 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
salt and pepper
3 tablespoon unsalted butter
1 cup thinly sliced fresh mushrooms
1 cup heavy cream
½ cup freshly grated parmesan cheese
1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley

Melt 1 tablespoon of butter. Add scallops and saute until just about firm for 2 minutes. Transfer to plate. Add remaining 2 tablespoons of butter to the same pan. Add onion and saute, stirring until soft or about 5 minutes. Increase the heat to high, add mushrooms and saute, stirring occasionally, until the liquid evaporates, about 5 minutes. Add white wine and cook until reduced by half, Then reduce the heat to medium-low and add the cream. Simmer until thickened, which should be 2 to 3 minutes. Add lemon juice, parmesan cheese, scallops and salt and pepper to taste. Stir to combine. Divide the hot scallop mixture, among 6 flameproof scallop shells arranged in a shallow pan.

Slip under the broiler and boil until the tops are golden and bubbling at the edges, about 1-2 minutes. Spring with the parsley, and enjoy.

Yield: 6 servings; Nutrient Analysis Per Serving: Calories: 307 Total Fat: 23.4gm Calories from fat: 71.2% Cholesterol: 101mg Sodium: 264mg

Web Page
The NCAHCS website has been visited a total of 389,785 times since we went online in 1998. The Association website will have the most up to date information available on our quarterly meetings, our newsletter, in-service offerings and general news about the Association. Visit us at http://ncahcs.org

Membership Report
We ended the year with 336 members. Remember to renew your membership before July 1st. If you have not renewed by that time your name will be dropped from the membership roster. The 2005 membership application is posted on the webpage. It is an interactive form. Just fill in the blanks and then click the button at the bottom to print your application. Harriet Pratt

Treasurer’s Report
will not be published on the webpage version.

Roadside Wisdom
Signs seen along life’s highway.
“Failure is not in falling down, but in not getting back up.”
The annual meeting for 2005 will be held at the Hyatt Regency Albuquerque on September 17-21. Conference brochures have been sent in the mail and information as always is available on the website http://www.ashcsp.org. Attendees have the option to register early (before April 30th) at a potential savings of $150 over late registration (after August 1st).

Member recognition awards. Begin to look at your co-workers to determine who may deserve recognition. Information will be sent in the mail in the near future. The deadline for submissions will be July 1st. The member awards include the Educator of the Year award sponsored by Getinge, USA; The Thomas M. Samuels, PhD, Memorial Scholarship Award sponsored by 3M; The Peggy Ryan Technician of the Year Award sponsored by Steris Corporation; The CS Supervisor / Manager of the Year Award; Golden Slipper Award sponsored by Case Medical Solutions and the APEX Awards that recognize personal achievement and professional growth. If anyone would like further information please contact me.

The 5th edition of the Technicians manual has been finalized and hopefully in print in mid 2005 to include the information in the errata sheets and a section on ozone sterilization. The 4th Edition of the Technicians Manual continues at the discounted price of $60.00 for ASHCSP members. The Spanish translation is completed and so is a Japanese edition. The cost is $100 for non members and $80 for members. The Spanish workbook is $60 for non-members and $50 for members. Consideration is being given to include a 1 year membership in the ASHCSP with the purchase of a Technicians Manual.

Consideration has been given to change the term of office for ASHCSP Board Members from January to December to October 1st or the close of the Annual Meeting to the close of the annual meeting. This change will take effect at the close of business in Albuquerque.

If anyone would like to volunteer to be on an ASHCSP committee, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Paul Hess, BSN, RN, CRCST, ACSP
Region 2 Director

Answers to the January Post Test for “Sterile Storage”

1. The sterile storage area is usually an enclosed and highly restricted area that limits personnel traffic to minimize the entry of airborne contaminants. T
2. The air supplied to sterile storage areas ideally should be 65 to 72° F. T
3. The relative humidity in a sterile storage area should be in the range of 25 to 75 percent. F 35 to 75%
4. The number of air exchanges per hour for sterile storage areas ideally should be fifteen per hour. F 10 per hour
5. Airflow in the sterile storage area should be a positive pressure. T
6. Sterile items should be stored at least 8 inches from the floor and 8 inches from outside walls. F 8” from th floor and 2” from the wall
7. Medical devices, which contain pharmaceuticals or materials such as latex, will most likely have a shelf life indicated by an expiration date. T
8. FIFO means Fast In, Fast Out. F First In, First Out
9. When you handle a package you need to check for tears in the wrapper, soil, and evidence of water contamination, pinholes, intact seals, the sterilization chemical indicators, and its expiration date. T
10. Sterility maintenance cover may be applied to warm sterilized packages. F May not be applied to warm packages
It had been some time since Jack had seen the old man. College, girls, career, and life itself got in the way. In fact, Jack moved clear across the country in pursuit of his dreams.

There, in the rush of his busy life, Jack had little time to think about the past and often no time to spend with his wife and son. He was working on his future, and nothing could stop him.

Over the phone, his mother told him, "Mr. Belser died last night. The funeral is Wednesday." Memories flashed through his mind like an old newsreel as he sat quietly remembering his childhood days. "Jack, did you hear me?" "Oh, sorry, Mom. Yes, I heard you. It's been so long since I thought of him. I'm sorry, but I honestly thought he died years ago," Jack said. "Well, he didn't forget you. Every time I saw him he'd ask how you were doing. He'd reminisce about the many days you spent over on 'his side of the fence' as he put it," Mom told him. "I loved that old house he lived in," Jack said. "You know, Jack, after your father died, Mr. Belser stepped in to make sure you had a man's influence in your life," she said. "He's the one who taught me carpentry," he said. "I wouldn't be in this business if it weren't for him. He spent a lot of time teaching me things he thought were important...Mom, I'll be there for the funeral," Jack said.

As busy as he was, he kept his word. Jack caught the next flight to his hometown. Mr. Belser's funeral was small and uneventful. He had no children of his own, and most of his relatives had passed away.

The night before he had to return home, Jack and his Mom stopped by to see the old house next door one more time. Standing in the doorway, Jack paused for a moment. It was like crossing over into another dimension, a leap through space and time. The house was exactly as he remembered. Every step held memories. Every picture, every piece of furniture...Jack stopped suddenly. "What's wrong, Jack?" his Mom asked. "The box is gone," he said. "What box?" Mom asked. "There was a small gold box that he kept locked on top of his desk. I must have asked him a thousand times what was inside. All he'd ever tell me was ‘the thing I value most,’" Jack said.

It was gone. Everything about the house was exactly how Jack remembered it, except for the box. He figured someone from the Belser family had taken it. "Now I'll never know what was so valuable to him," Jack said. "I better get some sleep. I have an early flight home, Mom."

It had been about two weeks since Mr. Belser died. Returning home from work one day Jack discovered a note in his mailbox. "Signature required on a package. No one at home. Please stop by the main post office within the next three days," the note read. Early the next day Jack retrieved the package. The small box was old and looked like it had been mailed a hundred years ago. The handwriting was difficult to read, but the return address caught his attention. "Mr. Harold Belser" it read. Jack took the box out to his car and ripped open the package. There inside was the gold box and an envelope. Jack's hands shook as he read the note inside.

"Upon my death, please forward this box and its contents to Jack Bennett. It's the thing I valued most in my life." A small key was taped to the letter. His heart racing, as tears filling his eyes, Jack carefully unlocked the box. There inside he found a beautiful gold pocket watch. Running his fingers slowly over the finely etched casing, he unlatched the cover. Inside he found these words engraved: "Jack, Thanks for your time! Harold Belser." "The thing he valued most...was...my time." Jack held the watch for a few minutes, then called his office and cleared his appointments for the next two days. "Why?" Janet, his assistant asked. "I need some time to spend with my son," he said. "Oh, by the way, Janet...thanks for your time!"

Submitted by Pam Caudell – “Thanks for your time!”
### Mission Statement

North Carolina Association for Hospital Central Service Professionals will establish itself statewide as the leading educational organization through innovative programs that enhance the development of the Central Service Professionals.

**NCAHCSP Board of Directors 2004-2005**

<table>
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**Post Test Answer Key for “Sterile Storage” from the January Issue**

1. T  
2. T  
3. F  
4. F  
5. T  
6. F  
7. T  
8. F  
9. T  
10. F