

Scrutiny of processes to avoid costs



By Murray McDonald*

When it comes to cleaning in the healthcare industry we are always looking for the best ways to get the job done. We want better results, and faster and more convenient processes. Looking for ways to improve the cleaning process is important to maintain high standards within the healthcare industry and only continuous learning will see this

industry continues to be efficient and reflect a positive reputation when it comes to hygiene and sanitation.

However, learning about new processes and products is only one way the healthcare industry can learn and grow. Another way in which the industry can invest in continuous learning is to take a step back and look at current processes. Old habits are one of the biggest hindrances in moving forward. It is easy for people to forget that taking a look at what you are doing 'wrong' is just as important as finding new ways of going about processes the 'right' way.

Current cleaning techniques in the healthcare industry could be contributing to a poor cleaning process, and the costs of a poor cleaning process can vary. Having an 'old school' mentality can cost the healthcare industry its reputation and have a negative impact on the wellbeing of staff, patients and visitors. Each consequence will lead

to a cost in dollars, and ignoring existing poor cleaning practices will result in scrutiny for many healthcare facilities.

To avoid this happening to your healthcare business, the first step is to think about what your current processes are and why they are in place, look at what others in the industry are doing and eliminate the processes you see might be 'costing' your business.

The following are key elements that should not be a part of the healthcare industry cleaning process.

Wet floors

Wet floors have a number of consequences and associated costs. Floors can stay wet for a long period of time making them high-risk areas for slippages, particularly if the floor is in a high-foot traffic area, which regularly gets cleaned. Wet floors, combined with an overuse of chemicals, can make floors become even more slippery resulting in injuries and falls for staff, patients and visitors leading to violations of OH&S protocols.

As well as the physical hazards, a build up of mould and bacteria occurs in damp and wet environments so it's essential that the right cleaning machine or product be used for your specific flooring.

Using out-of-date methods

The mop and bucket is a 3000-year-old cleaning tool that is no longer efficient or meets infection control standards, particularly in the healthcare sector. However, some healthcare facilities are still using the mop and bucket as their primary cleaning method for cleaning bathrooms, operating theatres or vinyl corridors. This is particularly dangerous to the healthcare industry as a lack of proper cleaning can result in outbreaks.

The process of the mop and bucket clean involves the repeated action of running a dirty mop over floors and using recycled water. As this process is repeated the mop is spreading the dirt and contaminating other surfaces. Recycling dirty water only leads to cross infection and the transfer of bacteria and odours. Just because a surface looks clean doesn't mean that it is, in fact it could be dirtier than it was before it was 'cleaned'.

Over use of chemicals

In some aged care facilities, it's still believed that the more chemicals used equals a faster cleaning process, more bacteria killed and faster elimination of smells and odours. Although the use of chemicals is part of the cleaning process, an excess of chemicals will dirty floors rather than clean them.

It's prevalent in the aged care sector to believe that a facility needs copious amounts of chemicals and deodorising sprays to eliminate bad odours. However, long term this results in odours being trapped in carpets, and trapping stains and smells. It is assumed that chemicals will magically disappear as the floor dries, but this isn't the case. It is important to thoroughly wash off all chemicals used and not to over use them in the first instance.

When current and old processes are examined we find that we could be implementing techniques and processes that are harmful to patients, visitors and staff that have the opposite effect to a successful cleaning process. All of these factors will lead to consequences that will ultimately cost more money to resolve.

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