Supply chain management in the operating room

In a hospital, the operating room is one of the costliest units to run. A new study by Cardinal Health suggests that better supply chain management systems and analytics are needed to help reduce OR costs and support patient safety.

In a survey of surgical staff and hospital supply chain heads, Cardinal Health researchers found that OR surgeons and nurses are frustrated with their hospital's current manual inventory process. The majority (83 percent) of respondents' organisations are manually counting in some part of their supply chain. If inventory of supplies is done this way, it is not surprising that unexpected shortages and other problems occur. As survey results show:

- Nearly 40 percent of respondents reported they've actually cancelled a case, and 69 percent have delayed a case because of missing supplies.
- 27 percent of respondents have seen or heard of an expired product being used on a patient, while 23 percent have seen or heard of a patient harmed due to a lack of supplies.
- 64 percent of respondents admitted to hoarding supplies and cited waste or overuse of supplies as significant problems in their organisations.

Although only 15 percent of respondents' organisations have automated RFID systems, many of those polled see the benefits of automation. One in four say automated systems free up time to focus on patients and support better outcomes, and 39 percent agree automation reduces costs.

Meanwhile, 92 percent of frontline providers see the need for an inventory management system designed for the specific volume and nature of supplies in the OR. Although supply chain decision makers are most responsible for cutting costs, surgeons and OR nurses recognise the importance and are up for the challenge, according to the survey.

The majority (77 percent) of respondents would like to be more involved in supply chain decision-making, nearly half say "saving money helps us all," and three in four contend that quality patient care can be maintained while reducing costs.

Source: Healthcare IT News
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