

Meeting demand for compliance training

Ensuring compliance with best practice in decontamination is a top priority for healthcare providers and patient safety is paramount. However, as limited budgets for training have proven to be a challenge for many Trusts, areas of non-compliance can begin to emerge. iM Med is offering training services to support Trusts to drive improvement, reduce downtime and ensure compliance.

Decontamination teams often have to rely on in-house training between colleagues, but the quality of this training can be variable – gaps in knowledge, misinterpretation of guidelines and deviations can be perpetuated and cascaded from one individual to another, leading to divergence from best practice within a department over time. An outside perspective to evaluate the practice of operators within the department and identify areas for refresher training can prove invaluable – bringing processes back into compliance with national guidelines.

This is where partnerships can add value and guide Trusts with their improvement goals. Established in 2016 to provide decontamination solutions for Trusts, iM Med combines the provision of the Steelco range of decontamination equipment, disinfection chemicals, consumables and service support for hospitals. The complete solution spans four business divisions: iM Technical, iM Consumables, iM Equipment and iM Compliance. The company's clinical director, Gillian Hill, explains that the latter was established in response to an identified need to support hospitals with the audit of best practice, technical advice, tailored training programmes and provision of free education opportunities, with a view to driving quality improvement.

"I previously worked within the NHS as



an infection control matron for 14 years, before joining iM Med. During that time, the brands I remained loyal to were those that put an emphasis on training and supporting NHS staff with advice," Gillian comments. "It is crucial that this runs through the core of a supplier – we firmly believe that the approach should not be about selling a metal box, then walking away; we sell a relationship rather than just equipment. Trusts enter into an eight-year relationship and we become their virtual department to support them."

The iM Compliance department helps hospitals to meet the demands of the

CQC, the Health Act, JAG and, crucially, with ensuring patient safety. This includes interpretation of weekly, quarterly and annual reports and assistance with corrective and/or preventative actions following out of specification results. If the Trust's machines have been out of use or consistently returning out of specification testing results, specialist engineers will carry out a full machine health check to diagnose the root cause and correct the issue.

The approach is to provide a planned, preventative maintenance strategy to reduce unplanned downtime. Key performance indicator reporting is provided for all sites and meetings are held with Trusts to discuss any key themes and trends, as well as response times (iM Med guarantees same day/next day responses). When these health checks are dovetailed with training, operator errors that result in breakdowns are significantly reduced.

"It is important that Trusts feel they can call on somebody to support them, who shares their passion for patient safety. This may include the provision of technical advice ►

These are busy departments under pressure to quickly turnaround and deliver devices to clinical staff, but they cannot compromise on safety. Understanding how to best balance efficiency with safety is crucial.



or assistance with compliance issues – such as the interpretation of standards or quality systems,” Gillian explains.

“We have seen high demand for our training services. Budgets are becoming increasingly challenged in hospitals – not just in terms of paying for courses but also in terms of releasing time to take part in training. Managers are in a difficult position; they have a finite resource to work with. We provide service agreements for over 70 NHS Trusts and the vast majority have access to free of charge training as part of these contracts.

“We offer an outsider’s view and advice, which can be much easier for staff to take on board. The training reinforces the essential requirements for patient safety, but best practice may look different from site to site, so we guide teams on optimising procedures and processes for their department, according to their individual circumstances.”

Zoë FayersRust is the divisional manager for iM Compliance and has conducted site visits across a large number of Trusts. Previously a senior research scientist with 2030 Labs, she joined iM Med with extensive knowledge of sterilisation and decontamination processes for medical devices. She has a track record of designing experiments for hospitals and manufacturers to evaluate efficacy of reprocessing, device storage, protein detection and other critical steps to ensure patient safety. This scientific investigation has given Zoe a broad understanding of the most effective approaches, as well as the opportunities for

improvement for hospitals.

“These are busy departments under pressure to quickly turnaround and deliver devices to clinical staff, but they cannot compromise on safety. Understanding how to best balance efficiency with safety is crucial,” Zoe comments. She believes a gentle approach to compliance audit and training is required – a third-party organisation can help prevent difficult relationships between colleagues and disrupt the view: ‘this is how we have always done it’.

“Inhouse training can be like Chinese whispers – if one person’s knowledge is imperfect, mistakes can be replicated throughout the team. The end result may not be unsafe practice, but it may not be optimal. A fresh perspective can identify gaps in knowledge and deviations that have crept into practice, while re-training provides a ‘factory re-set’ taking departments back into compliance.

“We ask Trust operators: ‘what have you been doing?’ and invite them to reflect on why are you doing it this way, are these practices based on scientific fact, is it safe, or are these historical issues that have built up over time?

“I initially talk to the managers and ask them where they think the gaps are and any areas of concern. The endoscopy decontamination equipment maybe reporting lots of errors or there may be an issue with how the operators connect up the scopes. It is not about telling operators they are getting it wrong but prompting discussion on how

they can do it a better way. This helps puts people at their ease,” she explains.

She adds that decontamination staff often do not receive the recognition they deserve for the work that they do, so it is important to make them feel their contribution is valued: “Asking questions, listening to them, letting them vent about their challenges is important; they may feel they may want more support in certain areas, and I can offer this. I ask them ‘what can I do for you to help make your life easier?’ This may include creating visual aids, such as laminated sheets that act as a quick guide, helping operators to reduce mistakes and eliminate variation,” Zoe continues.

iM Med Compliance has found the greatest demand is for training on equipment, such as endoscope washer disinfectors, drying cabinets, flushing systems and packing systems. This typically includes a mix of new operator training and refresher training, while staff are also annually assessed for competency.

“Staff may undertake a quiz at the end of the training session to ensure they have fully understood the key elements. In addition, new operators may need hand holding and to be shown how to use the equipment. They are provided with a workbook that they can refer back to and I talk them through the equipment. I check the workbooks at the end of the day in case they have missed something or have misunderstood. However, Trusts sometimes require training on bespoke areas where issues have been identified.

“We find that having an outside person

deliver training on those problem areas removes the confrontational element and staff will often take on board advice and instruction from an independent expert in a way that they may not from a colleague. They feel you are on their side and they can open up in a way that they won't to a manager," Zoe comments.

Some of the common areas staff need extra help with include understanding the requirements of COSHH and chemical risk assessment. iM Med also helps them understand why completing paperwork is important and what their liabilities are if they do not follow procedures.

"A lot of regulatory documents are open for local interpretation. I can help them identify their basic requirements, what is essential to comply with in order to be safe, then offer a perspective on the optimal ways of implementing practices, where improvements can be achieved," says Zoe.

As it can be difficult to find the time to release staff from a busy reprocessing unit, iM Compliance offers a choice of onsite or offsite training. The training is CPD certified and attendees are provided with certificates to evidence completion. In the wake of the pandemic, however, site visits have become more difficult, so online resources have been developed to support staff during these challenging times.

As the writer Maya Angelou once said, 'people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel'.

While all large public gatherings are currently on hold, due to the Corona virus, iM Med has previously delivered a series of one-day conferences across the country and these will be resumed or conducted online, depending on the evolving situation. The education events are aimed at teams involved in endoscope decontamination, from frontline decontamination technicians to senior management, and provide an essential overview – including legislative requirements, microbiological facts and practical advice, to ensure hospital departments are effective and compliant. The educational programme is developed in partnership with high profile experts in decontamination and infection prevention – including Wayne Spencer, authorising engineer, decontamination, and Dr. Helen Griffiths, decontamination advisor, British Society of Gastroenterology.

Last year, the educational day was headed by Mr Floyd Woodrow – a renowned speaker on leadership and performance and one of the youngest soldiers to be selected

for the elite SAS. Floyd presented on leading teams in high pressured environments, drawing on comparisons between the military and healthcare.

Ultimately, everyone in healthcare wants to do the right thing and keep patients safe. iM Med says that it aims to give staff the tools to achieve this to the best of their ability. As staff return to decontamination services, having been redeployed to other areas during the pandemic, Trusts are experiencing increased demand for re-training. Going forward, third-party partnerships for training will offer a cost-effective approach to maintaining high standards of compliance.

"You can have as many policies on the shelf as you want, but they are useless if they are rarely read," concludes Gillian Hill. "Receiving one-to-one training in an engaging way can make a real difference; it is all about how that person makes you feel about what you are doing and how they support you. As the writer Maya Angelou once said, 'people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel'." CSJ

Dräger

For Non-Invasive Ventilation,
think Dräger



TO FIND OUT MORE VISIT WWW.DRAEGER.COM



DraegerGlobal

Draeger

@DraegerNews

Draeger

Dräger. Technology for Life®