



## CASE STUDY SNAPSHOT

# Optimizing Preference Cards for Perioperative Success at Sanford Health

## Trends

**20-33%**  
hospital waste

North American operating rooms alone are responsible for 20-33% of total hospital waste.<sup>1</sup>

**\$10K**  
discarded supplies

Every day more than \$10,000 of material is likely thrown out in the stockroom due to staff shortages.<sup>2</sup>

**61%**  
of supplies

Only 61% of supplies on a typical preference card are actually used.<sup>3</sup>

## About **Sanford Health**

**Sanford Health, the largest rural health system in the United States, is dedicated to transforming the healthcare experience and providing access to world-class healthcare in America's heartland.**

Headquartered in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, the organization serves more than one million patients and 220,000 health plan members across 250,000 square miles. The integrated health system has 47 medical centers, 2,800 Sanford physicians and advanced practice providers, 170 clinical investigators and research scientists, more than 200 Good Samaritan Society senior care locations and world clinics in eight countries around the globe.

<sup>1</sup> <https://healthydebate.ca/2016/08/topic/hospital-medical-waste/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://scm.ncsu.edu/scm-articles/article/physician-preference-cards-the-key-to-hospital-low-inventory-utilization-and-waste>

<sup>3</sup> <https://terniogroup.com/optimizing-surgical-supply-lists-in-the-operating-room/>

# Challenges

**In most health systems, the Sterile Processing Department (SPD) is worlds apart from the Operating Room (OR) in terms of physical space, perceived role in patient care and control over items processed, picked and packed for procedures.**

Following the integration of the Tecsyst Elite™ Healthcare POU solution in 2018, the Sanford Health Fargo Sterile Processing team discovered low scanning compliance in the OR and confirmed that about 45% of items they picked based on preference cards and sent to the OR came back to them unused resulting in significant waste and expense, and in some cases, jeopardizing patient care and safety.

## Obstacles to overcome:



### Wasted time

*Reprocessing reusable instruments and devices that were not used.*



### Wasted resources

*Returning unopened sterile supplies both on front-end picking and packing and back-end putting away.*



### Undocumented items

*Unable to identify whether items were used, but undocumented, wasted, lost or hoarded.*



**“You can ask any staff member in Sterile Processing to identify waste in the preference cards, and they will be able to tell you straight down to the surgeon, type of case, staff in the room, and products being wasted because they see it day in and day out.”**

**Susan Pfeifer**

*Director of Sterile Processing  
Sanford Health*



# Solutions

## Finding the Right Technology

In 2018, the Sanford Health team wanted to tightly integrate the Tecsys Elite™ Healthcare POU solution and its Epic electronic health record (EHR) system with POU scanning of items in procedural areas. The solution enables their health system to track items in real time, access Perioperative data and product status and perform accurate case costing.

## Forming the Maintain Gains Team

In an effort to optimize preference cards and improve efficiency among the surgical services team (SPD and OR), Sanford Health assembled a team and initiative named “Maintain Gains” (MG) to carry out a suitable approach.

## Preference Card Utilization Threshold

In conjunction with the Tecsys Elite™ Healthcare POU data, the Sanford Supply Chain Analytics team developed their own internal utilization report that showed what was picked for each case, compared it to items on the physician preference cards in Epic and linked the information to item master data in their enterprise resource planning (ERP) system. Based on this work, they proposed guidance as to what should be included on – and removed from – preference cards.

## Achieving Success

Using the utilization threshold as a guide, the Maintain Gains team went back and forth with OR leaders and advanced techs to resolve supply documentation and scanning compliance issues. After multiple trials and errors, the MG team gained support from Leadership and developed a steady process to optimize preference cards and maintain high utilization rates using tools and resources developed by the SPD team.



**“The POU scanning took it down to the patient and procedure level, which opened up a lot of new data points and opportunities for SPD. We really wanted to be able to understand the flow of materials from arrival to the perpetual warehouse and all the way through the value stream of the patient within the OR. It was about understanding how we are truly using our preference cards and eliminating waste within those cards.”**

**Susan Pfeifer**  
*Director of Sterile Processing*  
Sanford Health

# Outcomes

**The Sanford Health Fargo Sterile Processing team is leading an effort to optimize physician preference cards, in collaboration with the Supply Chain and Perioperative teams.**

Sanford Health's work on preference card optimization has set a new standard for healthcare. The technology and processes they have designed, built and implemented in partnership with Tecsys have not only allowed them to vastly improve their own supply chain and surgical services, but serves as a playbook for other health systems.

## Results

**90% +**

*preference card accuracy rate.*

**\$1.4 M**

*in savings in reduction of on-hand inventory.*

**600+**

*optimized preference cards (across SPD, Supply Chain and OR).*



**"I've been in Sterile Processing for 31 years and firmly believe there should be greater advocacy for what we do. I desire to influence other Sterile Processing leaders to take risks and not be docile. You can stand alone on your own accord for the work you do and its impact on patient outcomes. If our story helps to influence just a handful of people to take that risk, then I have achieved my goal."**

**Susan Pfeifer**

*Director of Sterile Processing  
Sanford Health*

**Speak to a Healthcare Supply Chain expert**



For more information about Tecsys  
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