



Health Study: Multiple Use of Single-Use Products in Hospitals Pays off

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The topic of recycling single-use products is often discussed by experts in a controversial manner. A new study now finds that if medical products are professionally reprocessed following a validated procedure, the risk for patients does not increase.

"The discussion surrounding the recycling of single-use medical products is mainly economically-driven but also contains an ethical component in cases where non-recycling means rationing and/or recycling puts patients at risk," explains Prof. Dr. Dr. Wilfried von Eiff, Academic Director at the Ludwig Fresenius Center for Health Care Management and Regulation at HHL Leipzig Graduate School of Management.

His study, titled "Aufbereitung und Reparatur: Im Spannungsfeld zwischen Qualitätsanspruch und Kostendruck" ("Recycling and Repair - At the Heart of the Conflict Between Quality Standards and Cost Pressure"), finds that most people do not have a problem with using single-use products multiple times. According to the study, impairments in the handling or functionality tend to occur in particular when unsuitable products are used and/or when organizational and testing procedures are faulty.

Reprocessing following a validated procedure

"The reprocessing of single-use products, following a validated procedure conducted by a professional service provider, is regarded by the users as a major step towards increasing economic efficiency in health care and as a contribution to environmental protection and the conservation of resources," states study leader Prof. von Eiff.

The examination also found that users have a great interest in so-called limited patient use products. The users - as well as approximately 60 percent of those opposed to recycling - expect legal certainty, increased economic efficiency and reliable functionality from these products which are specifically constructed for multiple, controlled reprocessing.

Users criticize the fact that manufacturers of single-use products often redesign their products to make recycling more difficult on purpose. This practice has increased material costs in hospitals by up to 25 percent.

Impressive cost effects when recycling catheters

Prof. von Eiff describes the cost-cutting effects which arise from the professional reprocessing of single-use products with electrophysiological catheters as an example. They are used for ablations in about 46,000 to 50,000 interventions in Germany per year. The medical economist concludes, "For this product alone, our research has identified a cost reduction potential of EUR 16 to 23 million per year just in Germany." The effects are similar in other European countries.

The study titled "Aufbereitung und Reparatur: Im Spannungsfeld zwischen Qualitätsanspruch und Kostendruck" ("Recycling and Repair - At the Heart of the Conflict Between Quality Standards and Cost Pressure") by Prof. Dr. Dr. Wilfried von Eiff will be presented during the 17th annual P.E.G. Symposium which will take place in Munich on October 13, 2016.

Prof. Dr. Dr. Wilfried von Eiff

Prof. von Eiff serves as Academic Director of the Ludwig Fresenius Center for Health Care Management and Regulation of HHL Leipzig Graduate School of Management. In addition, he holds an extraordinary professorship for Health Care Management here and is therefore integrated in the academic group of Economics and Regulation. He has also been the head of the Centre for Hospital Management at the University of Münster since 1994. Amongst others, his work focuses on purchasing and logistics management, mergers and acquisitions, quality and risk management, medical controlling as well as benchmarking. Prof. von Eiff acts as a Health Economics Consultant for the International Institute for Health Economics. At HHL, Prof. von Eiff is, amongst others, involved in teaching through the part-time MBA in General Management Program with a focus on Hospital Management and Health Services. www.hhl.de/chcmr

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Anlage: Bild

