

International Association of Healthcare Central Service Materiel Management

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Instrumental to Patient Care®

Date April 10, 2009

Office of Governor Charlie Crist
State of Florida
The Capitol
400 S. Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

Honorable Governor Charlie Crist

As the premier association representing healthcare professionals in the field of sterile processing/Central Service, the International Association of Healthcare Central Service Materiel Management (IAHCSMM) was alarmed and disheartened by recent reports of endoscope equipment-related incidents that occurred at Florida's Miami Veterans Affairs Healthcare System, as well the York Veterans Administration Hospital in Murfreesboro, TN.

Unfortunately, these two incidents are neither unique to the VA system nor to these two states. Similar errors occur each year throughout the nation – some of which are never publicized, but are nonetheless devastating to the patients, families and healthcare organizations involved. Such occurrences highlight the patient safety risks and hospital liability issues surrounding equipment processing errors, and underscore the need for ongoing education, staff competency and an overall commitment to quality to prevent similar mistakes from happening in the future.

Since its inception more than 50 years ago, IAHCSMM has been committed to providing sterile processing technicians with unsurpassed support and comprehensive, industry-leading professional development tools to drive excellence within the discipline. Sterile processing professionals are those responsible for ensuring that instrumentation and equipment used in medical and surgical procedures is properly cleaned, disinfected, inspected and sterilized prior to patient use. Clearly, this is a critical component in the delivery of quality patient care; unfortunately, the sterile processing profession is one whose value and contributions continue to be underestimated or overlooked by some healthcare organizations and state health officials.

IAHCSMM believes that sterile processing professionals in every facility throughout the nation must receive ongoing, formal training and become certified in order to perform their daily duties effectively and consistently. While some states are currently embarking upon mandatory certification initiatives for their sterile processing professionals, to date, only one state – New Jersey – has officially reached that goal. The frightening reality is that, in some facilities across the country (and, likely, within your own state), sterile processing professionals are performing this essential function in the absence of any formal training and certification requirements.

IAHCSMM is working tirelessly to raise the bar on knowledge advancement within the sterile processing discipline and to promote mandatory certification nationwide -- but we need your help. We urge you to become a champion to ensure mandatory training and certification for every sterile processing/Central Service professional in your state. Not only will such efforts promote healthcare quality and reduce the risk of hospital-acquired infections, they will help ensure that equipment-related mistakes, such as those making headlines in recent weeks, will not be repeated.

We welcome your thoughts on this important issue and encourage you to view our DVD, *Central Service: Instrumental to Patient Care*, to learn more about the profession. If you would like to speak about this matter further, please contact IAHCSMM at (800) 962-8274.

In the meantime, on behalf of IAHCSMM, I'd like to thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Lisa Huber

Lisa Huber, CRCST, ACE, FCS, BA
IAHCSMM President