
At Abington Memorial Hospital

Decision to go DEHP-free pays off in waste reduction and staff satisfaction

A Case Study in Value

Introduction

Abington Memorial Hospital is a fully accredited, 570-bed, regional teaching hospital located in Abington, Pennsylvania, a suburb of Philadelphia. With an overall mission to provide the highest quality health care, Abington has a long tradition of focusing on patient safety. More recently, Abington has launched an institution-wide green initiative to significantly reduce its environmental impact. By switching to di-2-ethylhexyl phthalate (DEHP)-free materials, Abington was able to uphold their tradition of commitment to patient safety in as environmentally friendly a manner as possible.

The Outcome at Abington

Abington quickly realized clinical and economic benefits in addition to the safety benefits of switching to DEHP-free containers and IV sets. Many of these stemmed from the fact that VisIV® containers have no overwrap, print the expiration date on the container itself and are shelf stable for up to 24 months.

For nurses and pharmacists at Abington, these features offered efficiencies over their previous IV containers. For example, batch processing, IV bag preparation and setup times in the pharmacy became faster.⁴ Overall, 89% of Abington pharmacists (n=17/19) preferred VisIV® containers vs their previous IV containers (Figure 1).⁴

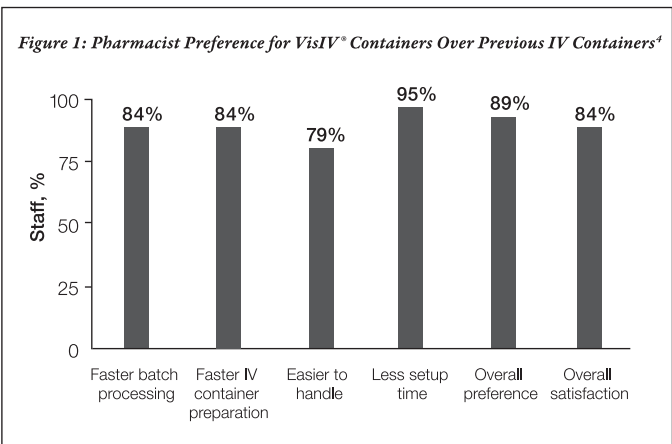
The expiration date is printed on the container, which helps save time. Previously nurses and pharmacists had to determine how long a bag could be used once removed from the overwrap. If a bag out of the overwrap wasn't dated, it was discarded.

From a clinical perspective, Abington nurses and pharmacists discovered additional benefits. In their efforts to get chemotherapy patients home faster, they appreciated the timesaving factor of not having to remove an overwrap. Overall, they found VisIV® containers to be easier to handle and prepare than their previous containers.⁴ And in one instance, the clear VisIV® container allowed an Abington pharmacy technician to detect that a particular drug had not been added.

Abington was able to reduce both waste and cost due to the fact that VisIV® containers are lighter than previous IV containers and overwrap-free. From October 2006 to September 2008, the switch to VisIV® containers resulted in an estimated 6 tons less clean waste and an estimated 10 tons less medical waste (Figure 2).⁵

Because of these and other green efforts, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency awarded Abington the Trailblazer Award for environmental leadership in 2006. The award recognizes hospitals that are paving the way for other hospitals to build upon their success and more easily implement similar programs. The award generated positive press for Abington and strengthened their image and standing within the community.

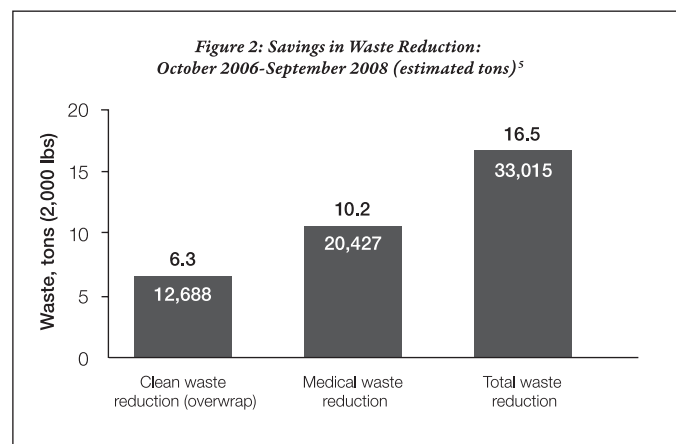
But as impressive as the awards and savings are, it's important to remember why Abington was interested in VisIV® containers and DEHP-free sets in the first place: to proactively address a potential threat to patient safety. While this may be the least measurable of all benefits, it was by far the biggest influence in terms of the Abington decision. Above all, Abington invested in VisIV® containers because they felt it was the right thing to do: for their patients, for themselves and for the environment.



Data reflect results from a survey provided by Abington pharmacists (N=19).

“In the oncology setting every second counts. Even saving a few minutes in the chemotherapy suite is beneficial for patients. They just want to get home as soon as they can.”

—Mary Ehrgott, RPh



Based on units of VisIV® containers used at Abington from October 2006 to September 2008.

“It is safer from a patient standpoint because in the design of the system, Hospira provided tamper-resistant ports.”

—Paul Rivers, Hospital Safety Officer

Conclusion

As with all hospitals, Abington faces the challenges of delivering the highest quality healthcare in as affordable a manner as possible. Abington was able to demonstrate how an investment in patient and caregiver safety by adopting VisIV® containers paid off in terms of a quantifiable reduction in waste and improved staff satisfaction.

“Abington Memorial Hospital is constantly seeking new opportunities to minimize our waste, while delivering the safest and most advanced patient care. The VisIV® container helps us reach these goals simultaneously.”

—Meg McGoldrick, Chief Operating Officer

Everyone at Abington agrees that early upper management interest in safety was critical. Mr. Rivers sums it up: “If upper management says that this is the right thing to do and that we’re committed as an institution to going DEHP-free to increase patient safety, everyone is quick to rally around it.”

Critical Success Factors

1. Explore the full benefits—both measurable and immeasurable
2. Get early upper management buy-in
3. Set up interdisciplinary team of all major departments to oversee process
4. Communicate the benefits to the hospital staff
5. Work closely with your provider’s representative to ensure a smooth transition
6. Alert waste management of the need to document savings early

References:

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