

CASE STUDY

Peer Education for Surgical Waste Management

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Case Setting

Over 200 colorectal resections are carried in our hospital per year. These procedures generate copious amounts of waste. How we manage our waste does not affect patient safety or outcomes. It is imperative that we tackle these areas when looking to achieve Carbon Net Zero as there is no debate or ethical issues with patient safety. Additionally, tackling this issue has multiple benefits apart from sustainability such as financial which is of utmost importance for the NHS these days.

Intervention

Education is a key principle when wanting to implement change within the NHS. People are more likely to try if they believe in the cause. We therefore taught at an Educational Half Day and explained what should go in each bin and the cost savings. We then added a recycling bin to anaesthetic rooms and all different bins in theatre. This is because everyone is stressed and pressured, and they are more likely to oblige if it is convenient. We also sent updates of waste reductions, savings on email.

Measurement

We collected 3 months' worth of data to gage a baseline after every operation to see how many of each type of waste bag was filled. Over the three months we had 65 operations worth of data. We carried out focused semi-structured interviews on different staff groups ranging from those in theatre (nurse, ODP, doctors) to those who support clinical work (procurement, estates, infection control and finance). These interviews helped us gain an understanding into the barriers and enablers of implementing sustainable change to do with waste within the theatres. We were able to use the enablers and barriers to help with a solid implementation of our changes regarding theatre waste streams. We spoke with the estates team to work out the

cost to the trust when disposing of waste compared to incinerating it and showed the potential savings to the trust. This helped to get finance and management to support the implementation. We have not completed the next set of interviews or have data on change

Challenges and Enablers

With the current state of the NHS sustainability is not the main priority. Everyone is short of time and therefore we had to implement something that did not increase the workload. All waste bins needed were within the rooms i.e. anaesthetic room and within each theatre rather than communally in a corridor. We deciphered people only keep doing something if they understand why and get feedback hence, we did teaching, posters and emails. Lastly, due to cost savings management supported the project