

Human Factors Advice for Medical Device Reprocessing Department Spinal Screw Selection Errors

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ABSTRACT

Patient Safety Concern

An AHS Medical Device Reprocessing Department reported that there have been mix ups between two different spinal screw types that are very similar in appearance. If the wrong screw is placed in the screw sorting pan that is sent to an operating room, this can result in delays in surgery.

Project Details

A human factors specialist conducted a review of the root causes of the error by conducting interviews and observations at the site, reviewing incident reports, and reviewing instructions provided to staff. Recommendations for mitigating the error included:

- Adding a warning to the staff instruction materials to describe that there are different types of screws and screw confirmation tools that are not interchangeable.
- Increasing the likelihood of mapping between instructions and the storage carts for the screws by using the same language on both.
- Requesting vendor changes to the packaging to make the labelling of the screw types more different and to increase the size of the differentiating numbering on the labelling.
- Removing a blue plastic band around the packaging as it obstructed the key information on the label.

Contact humanfactors@ahs.ca for more information about this project