

Feature

Novation Eases Access to Environmentally Preferred Purchasing Resources

Challenge > Mounting governmental imperatives, consumer demand and inherent obligations to promote good health are propelling hospitals to scrutinize the environmental impact of their purchasing decisions.

On April 22 – Earth Day 2008 – VHA's contracting services company, Novation, launched an Environmentally Preferred Purchasing (EPP) Web portal to support members' "green" efforts. The new EPP page on Marketplace highlights nearly 300 Novation-negotiated contracts containing environmentally friendly products. Helpful listings, resources and links address all functional areas of a hospital facility.

The portal also spotlights suppliers that actively practice corporate stewardship and sustainability. "It's a guiding philosophy, not just some products," states Jennifer Waddell, Novation's senior director, Clinical Solutions. Waddell's group works with contracting units to address clinical and safety aspects of contracts.

"Hospitals are starting to think of environmental stewardship as a part of how they deliver patient care," Waddell explains. "The good news is that when they start looking for ways to decrease waste and improve efficiencies, they don't have to sacrifice patient safety; they don't have to add a lot to the workload; and often, they find environmentally friendly alternatives at price parity or even at a savings."

As expected, the portal points members



John Ebers and Jim Jednak of Metro Health Hospital, located near Grand Rapids, Mich., on the "green" roof of their facility.

to organically certified food, certified green cleaners and products that are packaged efficiently to reduce waste. It also provides criteria for green purchasing and tools to compare suppliers that help hospitals make environmentally

informed decisions.

For example, they can learn whether a manufacturer reclaims water, uses recycled content, offers product take-back programs or is mercury-free. And the EPP portal includes any applicable third-party

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endorsements, such as Energy Star, Greenfield or USDA-certified organic.

VHA member Metro Health Hospital, a new 208-bed acute-care osteopathic hospital near Grand Rapids, Michigan, has taken full advantage of VHA's and Novation's EPP resources. The groundbreaking healthcare facility, which replaced a smaller hospital in September 2007, earned the U.S. Green Building Council's LEED certification.

Its commitment to sustainability prompted serious scrutiny of the types of products that would be purchased and brought into the hospital. These efforts have been led by John Ebers, Metro Health's sustainable business officer, and Jim Jednak, director of purchasing. One of the first things they accomplished was switching to Green Seal Certified cleaning products to avoid the use of chemicals – and their “hospital” smell. A new fiber mop system further reduced usage of cleaning products by 97 percent and decreased water consumption by about 3 percent. Overall, green cleaning has saved Metro Health about \$10,000 per year.

“We went from toxic-smelly to green-friendly AND saved money using Novation

agreements,” says Jednak.

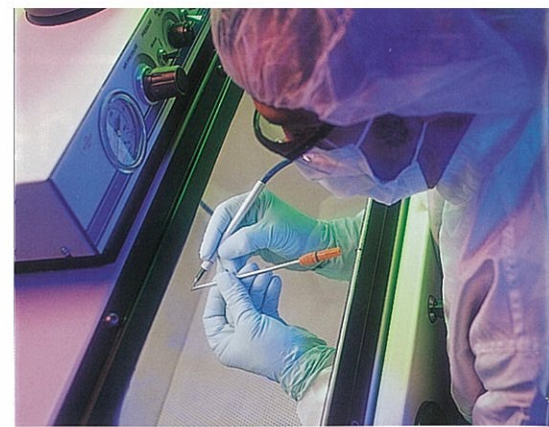
One of the EPP suppliers that helps VHA members reuse and recycle is Ascent Healthcare Solutions. Through its reprocessing program, the Phoenix-based medical device company keeps FDA-cleared “single-use” medical devices out of landfills, while maximizing savings through procurement and cost avoidance. Items that cannot be reprocessed are appropriately recycled.

Following rigorous reprocessing, each device is individually function tested to ensure it is equivalent to an original device.

“Purchasing a reprocessed device typically costs about half as much as buying an original,” says Rick Ferreira, chief operating officer for Ascent.

Reprocessing also lowers costs to dispose of medical waste. Cumulatively since 2002, the 413 VHA members using Ascent's services have saved an estimated \$142.4 million in supply costs and \$721,000 in waste avoidance by diverting approximately 1,400 tons from landfills.

Drawing a line in the sterile sand, Jednak and Ebers have implemented a set of overarching guidelines for the product selection process at Metro Health Hospital.



Excluded are products that contain latex, have mercury content, come packaged in Styrofoam, or contain PVC or DEHP.

“If our industry is trying to promote healthy lifestyles, how can we do that if we keep poisoning the environment in which we're trying to be healthy?” Jednak asks. “We're trying to change things.” <

– Judy Levene

Opportunities >

- To explore the Novation Environmentally Preferred Purchasing Web portal, go to https://www.vhamarketplace.com/environmentally_preferred/

Green Purchasing Pays Healthy Dividends for Metro Health

Eco-efforts supported by
Novation and VHA:

- Rigid containers in sterile processing – cut surgical waste by 70 percent
- Rigid metal surgical trays – eliminate plastic waste in the OR, promote efficiency
- Green Seal Certified cleaning agents from 3M – no toxins or “hospital” smell
- Microfiber mop system – uses 43,000 fewer gallons of water, cuts chemical use 90 percent
- Reusable sharps containers – saved 7.8 tons in medical waste, \$2,000 in cost avoidance since 2005
- Reprocessing of surgical instruments – generates six-figure savings
- All gloves latex-free – Kimberly-Clark exam gloves, Regent surgeons' gloves
- GREENGUARD-certified furniture from Steelcase – minimizes chemical emissions
- Disposable cafeteria cups and plates – made from biodegradable corn and sugarcane



2008
Environmentally
Preferred Purchasing Catalog

VHA

Feature

Resources to Reduce, Reuse, Recycle – and Reap Multiple Benefits

A wealth of “green” purchasing resources is now a click away on Marketplace, accessed through Novation’s new Environmentally Preferred Purchasing (EPP) Web Portal. Beyond the environmental impact of the products and services offered through identified contracts and suppliers, many also offer novel functional attributes that contribute to patient and caregiver safety.

“We are passionate about finding products across the spectrum of our portfolio that are safe for patients, health care workers and the environment,” said Maryann Restino, vice president, contract and program services at Novation. “Clearly, there is symbiosis between patient safety and environmental stewardship.”

Case in point: PVC- and DEHP-free I.V. bags from Hospira, introduced in 2006. Its polyolefin-based VisIV containers generate 40 to 70 percent less waste than other flexible I.V. containers, while also reducing drug interactions and needlestick injuries. Sterile ports save supplies and time, especially in emergency situations. And without the need for a separate overwrap, hospitals find it easier to read the container label, potentially reducing medication errors.

“Within the last few years, improvements in materials technology enabled us to find a more advanced material and make evolutionary improvements to what is being used,” explains Bob Felicelli, Hospira’s vice president of Specialty

Injectable Pharmaceuticals.

Biodegradable patient bedside items (bedpans, urinals, wash basins) from Vernacare offer an excellent alternative to plastic. These receptacles are manufactured from 100-percent-recycled newspapers and telephone books without any dyes or toxic bleaches. The addition of a natural resin helps keep the utensils leakproof. After use, the paper utensils are macerated into fine mulch inside their companion disposal unit and disposed of safely. The system eliminates landfill and incineration costs, improves infection control within the hospital and provides significant labor savings.

Daniels SharpSmart offers a sharps management system with built-in safety and security features. Each reusable sharps container is FDA-approved for up to 500 uses. Every 100 beds converted from disposable containers avoids as much as 3.5 tons of plastic waste and up to one ton of cardboard waste per year. When full, the container locks itself to prevent overfilling. Sharps of all shapes can be deposited with one hand, and needles cannot pierce the material, reducing needlestick injuries. Plus, side locks make the containers tamperproof, providing added security.

“Hospitals are facing increasing regulation in segregating their hazardous and nonhazardous medical waste,” says Daniels Vice President David Skinner. “As you segregate that waste, and you get larger volumes and more containers, security becomes more and more important.” <

Find it on the Environmentally Preferred Purchasing Portal:

https://www.vhamarketplace.com/environmentally_preferred/

- A list of contracts with environmentally preferred products (EPP)
- A newly launched print-on-demand EPP catalog spotlighting 43 suppliers
- Links to the full Novation catalog, with pricing tier and contact details
- Environmental news related to the EPP program
- Novation’s EPP program goals
- Rotating featured contracts
- Links to resources, such as Practice Greenhealth, Healthcare Without Harm, EPA
- Recommendations, considerations and criteria for green purchasing
- Information to compare suppliers on environmental responsibility
- Resources on PVC and DEHP, and the need for alternatives