

Lucile Packard NICU Makes Major Strides to Remove DEHP and Saves \$200,000 by Switching to Custom-made DEHP-free IV Product

Lucile Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford (LPCH) is a 241-bed facility located on the campus of Stanford University in Palo Alto, California in the heart of Silicon Valley. It is an internationally recognized pediatric and obstetric health care organization dedicated to excellence in patient care, education, and research. Serving children and pregnant women, LPCH admits more than 12,000 patients per year.

LPCH's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) staff has been addressing environmental safety and children's health for more than 20 years. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, a group of nurses formed an informal product committee to look at what they could do to improve the hospital for their patients and themselves as workers, while helping to reduce costs for the facility. This informal group was a place of information sharing for nursing staff and ultimately a source for education and advocacy around children's chemical exposures.

One of the first environmental toxicant issues that LPCH staff took on was the issue of latex for both patients and staff. In the mid-1990s, the NICU undertook a latex-free effort.

In the Fall of 1998, the hospital created a formal committee networked through the Vermont Oxford Network, entitled "Better Outcomes for Babies" (BOB). Staff throughout the hospital are on this committee, including the head of quality

assurance; the director of the NICU; the director of neonatology; representatives from respiratory therapy, purchasing and pain services; and nurse managers from the NICU. The goal of BOB is to address anything chemical or physiological that might impact patients. Basically BOB is an effort to make Packard hospital a better experience for babies.

In the mid 1990s, several staff members from LPCH involved in the BOB began to read articles and research identifying the potential problem for neonates from di-2-ethylhexyl phthalate (DEHP) exposure. Soon after that, the BOB took on the DEHP-free mantle. Staff presented the patient safety issues of DEHP to the BOB committee as well as the Skin Care committee. Both committees responded quite favorably to efforts to reduce the Packard NICU's reliance on medical devices containing DEHP.

As the discussions unfolded, staff advocating a DEHP-free NICU provided education about exposure and liability issues the hospital would face if it did not switch away from DEHP. The staff did not want any patient harmed. Striving for quality of care was foremost in their minds.

In the Fall of 2001, the entire hospital's IV system contract was out for bid. The Clinical Nurse Specialist at the time presented the BOB with information about the DEHP-free alternatives available and the potential cost savings to the hospital to move away from DEHP. The discussion,

while slow, tedious, and excruciatingly difficult, took into consideration the patient safety issues, the costs and the benefits of switching products.

Ultimately Baxter, Inc. won the bid and agreed to provide a custom-made IV system product hospital-wide. The system will be in use by August 2003. The decision to go DEHP-free is expected to save the hospital approximately \$200,000 per year.

Su Tsao, product value analyst, has recently championed the DEHP-free environment to both the Stanford Hospital and Clinics and LPCH product councils. The purchasing department's understanding of the DEHP issue shows its commitment to the quality of care to patients and families.



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