

PRACTICELIFE

Colourful organisation

A splash of colour never hurt anyone. **Zirc dental** explains how using a colour-coded system can make your practice be more efficient

Managing the overwhelming amount of instruments and materials used takes a lot of training, careful planning and a lot of time. An efficient way to optimise organisation to its fullest is to implement a colour-code system. Colour coding has been used for decades in many industries (not to mention in our everyday lives) and is proven to be an effective way of managing anything.

A colour-code system offers the eye instant recognition and reduces the time searching for the items you need, which is very valuable in the dental office. It's simple to start: assign a colour to each procedure in your practice and then identify everything by placing it in the appropriate colour organiser, such as a tray, tub, instrument cassette or a bur holder. Items that do not fit into a colour-coded 'organiser can be identified by using colour-coded rings or tape.

Zirc's products were all developed to work together to give you a system that is efficient and saves you time. With more than 40 organisers available, and in an array of 16 colours to choose from, you are able to customise your own colour-code system that works for you.

To make it simple, we have broken down this system into four parts: storage, set-up, breakdown and sterilisation.

Material storage

To be an organised, efficient dental practice, you need to streamline your supplies. So the first area of your practice to organise is your materials. You probably have supplies stored in multiple places, which most likely include central sterilisation, the operatories and supply closets. The key part in organising these materials is knowing what supplies get stored where.

When your inventory arrives from your dental dealer, start by unpacking all items into one main location such as central sterilisation. This storage space will be considered your 'bulk storage area'. You should store these items so that they are easy to get to and you can clearly see all the items available. Labelling the outside of the cabinetry as to the contents will help ensure everything is put away in its intended place.

You will now take materials from your 'bulk storage area' and place them in two areas:

1. The first area is your operatory drawers. Here, you will want to store your commonly used materials such as cotton rolls, gloves, patient bibs, saliva ejectors and so on. Consistency is very important in inventory control so make sure all operatory drawers are stocked with the same supplies in the same locations. This will enable anyone to find materials promptly when needed and will also make the restocking process quicker.
2. The second area to store your materials in is the tubs. Remember, with the colour-code system you will have a different colour tub for each procedure holding your procedure-specific materials, such as composite, cements, sealers and so on.

The best way to remember which colour is for each procedure is to have a chart that shows this. It can be as simple as a chart with the name of the procedure and the assigned colour written next to it. All tubs are stored in a central location, such as central sterilisation and are restocked as needed. Now you can easily transport your procedure-specific materials into any operatory. With the utilisation of tubs you will be able to keep less inventory on-hand, since you will no longer be stocking each operatory with these procedure-specific materials.

By executing this process, you will simplify your inventory control that will allow you to keep a first-in-first-out routine on dated items, and an accurate count on the others. You will save time in counting inventory and save

money by using your products before they expire. Once supplies run low in these two areas, head back to your bulk storage location and restock as needed. You should do an inventory check once a week in both the sterilisation area and each operatory.

Procedure set-up

When you are ready to set-up an operatory for a procedure simply pull out the appropriate color-coded tray and tub. Your procedure tray will already contain all of your instrumentation for that procedure and your tub will have all procedure related materials needed.

Zirc considers the tub and tray to be like the dentist's toolbox because it contains all of your procedural items in an organised container that you can easily carry to the operatory without worrying about any items being left behind.

Begin setting up your chair side workspace by placing your commonly used items from the operatory drawers and your other supplies from the tub on your tray. You should only pull the materials you will use from the tub. Set the tub cover back on top of the tub but do not lock it. This will prevent aerosols from settling on your materials, however, all materials will still be easily accessible should you need additional items. Now your tray is complete with all instrumentation and supplies. You can recover your tray with the lock-on cover or bib until the patient is in the chair and you are ready for the procedure.

To implement a colour-code system to its fullest, we recommend you identify your instruments. To do so, place colour-code rings or colour-code tape on all instruments. This will identify which procedure they are for. In the event that an instrument is ever separated from a cassette, everyone will know where it is supposed to go. We also suggest you place your colour-code rings or tape in a diagonal pattern; this will indicate which order the instruments will be used so the assistant always knows which instrument the doctor will need next.

Breakdown

The procedure is complete and now it is time to breakdown your setup. Dispose of all consumable materials at chair side such as the saliva ejector, cotton rolls, needles and any other single-use items. By disposing with these now it will save time in central sterilisation when the cleaning process is ready to begin and it also helps prevent potential injuries that may occur.

Place instruments back into their cassette and place any bur or endo files into their appropriate holders. Using cassettes will help protect personnel from accidental instrument sticks and also protect the instruments from unnecessary wear giving them a longer life. A bur or endo organiser will not only keep your items organised, but it will also allow you to separate them by procedure so that you are not carrying around every bur or file that you own in one container. In addition, with all instrumentation

into holders, you will save time during your cleaning and sterilisation process because they eliminate any individual instrument handling.

You can now lock-on your tray cover and surface disinfect any items that need to be stored back into the tub. At the same time, lock-on the tub cover and surface disinfect the outside of the tub. Both the tray and tub will be ready for safe transportation back to central sterilisation. Complete the process by finishing with your normal surface disinfection process of other equipment in the operatory and removing any barriers used.

Sterilisation

The colour-code system makes the sterilisation process faster, easier and eliminates unnecessary extra steps. The tub was already surface disinfected and now can be placed back into your cabinetry; it is ready for use for the next time that procedure is performed.

If you cannot get to the tray setup right after the procedure, make sure the cover is locked on and the trays can be stacked on the countertop to be processed at a later time. The lock-on covers will keep the contaminated items from being exposed and prevent any items from accidentally falling off. This will ensure this area stays safe.

Once you are ready to breakdown the tray, set up and begin the cleaning and sterilisation process, you will proceed with the following.

First, remove the locking cover and place your cassette and bur holder into the ultrasonic cleaner or instrument washer. A huge benefit from Zirc's organisers is that they are compact and lightweight and you can fit many procedures into one cycle compared to stainless steel holders. While these items are being cleaned, surface disinfect your tray and locking cover, then move these items over to the 'clean side' of central sterilisation. Remove the organisers from the ultrasonic or instrument washer.

If you used an ultrasonic for your cleaning method, you will want to rinse your items with water and then allow them to dry completely. If you used an instrument washer, you can remove your items and allow them to dry for there is no need for rinsing.

Next, you will wrap or bag all items and place them in the autoclave. Once sterilised, place the corresponding cassette and bur holder back on the appropriate tray, lock-on the cover and store back into the cabinetry. By having all your procedures colour-coded you will have no wasted time pulling out and separating each procedure's organisers for sterilisation. There are no loose instruments or tools that need to be individually cleaned and that eliminates exposure to sharp tools, extra time in cleaning and trying to remember which item goes with each procedure. Training also becomes simple because you are able to teach these processes by explaining the colour-code setups compared to each instrument and tool that needs to go with a specific procedure.

Conclusion

Applying a colour-code system to your practice takes time, dedication and a lot of patience, but in the end it will pay off immensely. You will have better inventory control, a more efficient setup and sterilisation process and you will have extra time to utilise towards additional patient appointments, helping out staff in other areas or just being able to work stress free and happy. **D**

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