

# Southlake Regional Health Centre cuts costs, improves efficiency with automated scrubs system

Earlier this year, at Southlake Regional Health Centre in Newmarket, Ont., if a visiting doctor needed a set of scrubs, it was a popular secret that he or she could walk into the OR unit and just take a set.

“There were no controls in place for access to scrubs,” says John Grajcar, Manager, Support Services, at Southlake. As the scrubs were in open carts, “Whatever people wanted to grab, they did,” he says.

This created three key problems for Southlake. The first was there was no way to tell if scrubs allocated for one unit were actually being used in that unit.

Second, Grajcar explains, “Each unit had a linen cart filled with a variety of different scrubs. People would dig through the piles to find matching colours and appropriate sizes. It left the cart looking like a buffet when it’s out of food.” Hospital staff often ended up in mismatched scrubs and the cart would have to be cleaned up regularly.

The third problem was the most serious. The hospital struggled with returning used



scrubs for laundering in a timely manner and would get charged replacement fees for garments. “This cost us an average of \$70,000 a year in additional charges,” says Grajcar.

In May 2013, Southlake launched

a full-service program by Cintas for hospital scrubs. The hospital now has two machines that are serviced by Cintas with poly-bagged tops and bottoms to ensure cleanliness, reduce cross-contamination and meet the needs of infection control standards. The scrubs are all the same style, with Southlake branding. Employees are allocated a number of scrubs they can have access to at any given time.

A staff member who needs a set of scrubs walks up to a machine, swipes his or her badge, selects their right top and bottom size, and the scrubs are dispensed. The Cintas program even allows wearers to mix and match their individual sizes. If that employee needs a second set, but is only allowed one set, the first set must be returned to the machine before a fresh set is dispensed.

Not only has this system improved the look of Southlake staff, it has reduced frustration and time spent cleaning up the old scrub cart. It has also allowed Grajcar to get a more accurate understanding of the usage of each hospital unit.

For example, under the old system, the OR department represented 55% of all the scrubs ordered in the hospital, but since the implementation of the Cintas system, it only accounts for 33%. “The best part is the controlled cost. We now have a standard cost per month. And the overall full-service process is cheaper today than with the previous system,” he says.

Beyond the impressive cost savings, Grajcar was happily surprised with one unexpected benefit. “Our ID badges are used for opening doors as well as identifying hospital staff. Since scrub access is tied to the badge, we now have higher compliance rates with badges, which improves security and safety at the hospital.” •

## Beyond apparel

Cintas support goes beyond the scrub dispensing program. Its other healthcare solutions include departmental uniforms, microfiber, mops and towels and a confidential document shredding service.

“We use Cintas for the microfiber cleaning service and shredding,” says John Grajcar at Southlake. The cleaning service offers hospitals a rental program for mops and wipes — eliminating inventory concerns and capital investment. The wash process at Cintas cleans soiled products that meet CDC guidelines. The shred-



ding service is a secure, on-site system that helps to ensure patient confidentiality through a PHIPA-compliant, corporate NAID-certified document destruction process.

Grajcar says the best benefit of using one provider for several different services (where permitted) is that the hospital’s needs can be met very cost-effectively.

Other healthcare solutions that Cintas offers include PPE apparel, a safe floor program that provides entrance and anti-fatigue matting and tile and carpet cleaning programs.

Find out more at [www.cintas.ca/healthcare](http://www.cintas.ca/healthcare)

