



# SHARPS INJURIES HURT

## How Pacific Dental Services® Eliminated the Pain

Dental Support Organizations (DSOs) need to make safety, consistency, and efficiency a top priority. It's critical to delivering the best patient experience and most stable business model. For Pacific Dental Services® (PDS), success came from a strategic partnership with Hu-Friedy.

How the best perform





## The Trial

Handling the administrative tasks for hundreds of dental offices across the country can be a daunting task, but it also provides a unique opportunity. With so much information and data available, DSOs can identify and address areas that require an increased focus and see significant gains.

Founded in 1994, Pacific Dental Services® (PDS) is one of the country's leading dental support organizations, providing supported autonomy that enables dentists to concentrate on clinical excellence and the highest levels of cost-effective comprehensive patient care. PDS has more than 635 support dental offices across the United States, with plans to expand into several new markets.

PDS pays close attention to the safety of their clinical team. Proper safety etiquette and compliance is at the forefront of each of their offices - even one sharps injury is considered one too many.

Sharps injuries put staff at risk of being exposed to infections such as hepatitis B, hepatitis C and HIV. These injuries also carry a significant cost. Between the time off, medical testing, and insurance, post-exposure management costs a practice up to \$3,000 per incident.<sup>1</sup> Finding a way to minimize the risk of sharps injuries is a top priority for this organization.

PDS already had an established partnership with Hu-Friedy. After the manufacturer completed

a sterilization observation to identify areas for improvement, the organization learned about the Instrument Management System® (IMS). This cassette-based system for organizing and managing instruments offers dental offices many benefits. However, PDS wanted more information.

To better understand the impact of cassettes, PDS identified two offices with an opportunity to reduce sharps injuries - one in California and one in Colorado. The plan was simple: compare the results after a year with control offices in equivalent markets that have similar sizes and layouts. Then they could determine if it made sense to implement IMS on a much larger scale.

## HOW IMS WORKS

IMS allows clinicians to move from cleaning through chairside without touching or damaging instruments, which improves safety and compliance.



CHAIRSIDE



CLEANING



STORAGE



STERILIZATION



## The Results

By the end of the year-long trial at the two offices, the results were nothing short of astonishing for PDS.<sup>®</sup>

### SHARP INJURIES ELIMINATED

After switching to cassettes, the two dental offices had **zero incidents of sharps injuries** during the trial period.

Cleaning instruments by hand increases the risk of sharps injury, as approximately 31% occur during cleaning.<sup>2</sup> With cassettes, instruments are contained throughout the sterilization process, which dramatically **lowers the risk** of occupational exposure. The only time staff has direct contact with any instrument is in the operatory with patients.

“  
**Sharps injuries were eliminated & also the time it took to process instruments went down by eight minutes.**  
”

PDS Compliance Manager

### GREATER EFFICIENCY

Because instruments are not scrubbed, sorted and pouched manually, the two offices **reprocess instruments eight minutes faster** with cassettes.

The extra time the cassettes give the team members throughout the day adds up. They can spend more one-on-one time with patients, building relationships, explaining treatment plans, and ensuring they are 100% comfortable. More importantly, the offices can **see more patients** throughout the day.

### PROTECTS INSTRUMENTS

Cassettes keep instruments organized and in proper cleaning positions, which helps the offices **protect their investment** in instruments.

Without cassettes, instruments are more frequently damaged during reprocessing or lost, which means offices buy new instruments more often. With cassettes, the **instruments are held securely** in place throughout reprocessing. This means the staff spends less time looking for lost instruments and replacing damaged ones.

“

My assistants are happier.  
My providers are happier.  
My patients are happier.

**We have all fallen in love with these cassettes.**

PDS Dental Practitioner

”

### FASTER ONBOARDING

The streamlined setup of the cassettes makes training new assistants **significantly faster** for the two offices.

Every instrument has a specific spot within the cassette, and the color-coded system allows procedural setups to be easily identified. When new assistants come into the dental office, they can quickly locate what is needed and **feel confident** it has all the necessary instruments.

“

**Instruments come out cleaner and more sterilized. It's a better flow for the office.**

PDS Office Manager

”

#### 1. Chairside

- Systematically organizes instruments according to procedure type, allowing for more focus on patients and less time spent looking for missing instruments.
- Neatly organized instruments offer a more professional appearance and can help enhance referrals.

#### 2. Cleaning

- Instruments are kept together throughout cleaning, rinsing and drying, reducing the potential for breakage or loss.
- Minimizes handling of instruments, reducing the chance for sharps injuries.

#### 3. Sterilization

- Complete procedures are packaged in IMS Sterilization Wrap and placed in autoclave together to help reduce consumable usage.
- Reduced handling of instruments provides safer protocol and minimizes liability.

#### 4. Storage

- Ready for use or storage until needed for increased time savings.
- Complete procedural set-ups for easy set-up and teardown.

**Hu-Friedy**<sup>®</sup>



“  
**The efficiency  
of having cassettes  
raises the bar  
for our dental offices.**  
”

PDS Compliance Manager

## The Implementation

Following the initial trial, PDS® expanded it to more locations to verify the findings, which generated identical results.

At this point, it was easy for the organization to see IMS delivered an impressive return on investment. There was the concrete data from the two trial offices, the positive feedback from staff, and the impact on the patient experience.

“The patients are always the first priority for anything that we do,” said the purchasing manager for PDS. “If it helps doctors build relationships with patients while also helping the leads at the same time, that’s a win-win for everyone.”

For PDS, there was also the added benefit of partnering with Hu-Friedy, an established leader in the industry committed to advancing dental performance.

“We always look for opportunities with the strategic partners we work with,” said the purchasing manager. “Working with Hu-Friedy regarding the cassettes was kind of a no brainer due to the fact both our companies are synonymous with excellence.”

When the organization began implementing cassettes in more offices, Hu-Friedy played a pivotal role to ensure the strategy was well executed. The company worked with key stakeholders from PDS, training them on IMS and the proper use of cassettes.

This included details on how to configure a cassette, how to place into the ultrasonic and autoclave, and how to wrap to ensure effective sterilization.

As more offices switched to IMS, the positive response proved this was the right decision.

“Now that we’ve implemented these cassettes in approximately 100 offices, the feedback continues to be the same,” said the compliance manager. “They really love the cassettes. They love the efficiencies of the cassettes.”

#### References:

1. CDC, “Sharps Injury Prevention Workbook,” available at [www.cdc.gov/Sharpssafety/pdf/WorkbookComplete.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/Sharpssafety/pdf/WorkbookComplete.pdf), p.6
2. Younai, F., Murphy, D., Kotelchuck, D. (2001). Occupational Exposures to Blood in a Dental Teaching Environment: Results of a Ten-Year Surveillance Study.

**EXPERIENCE  
THE BENEFITS  
FOR YOURSELF.**

Pacific Dental Services eliminated sharps injuries and significantly improved efficiency in their offices.

Contact Jessica Wilson, MPH at (404) 484-2036 or [JWilson@Hu-Friedy.com](mailto:JWilson@Hu-Friedy.com) and see firsthand how cassettes will benefit your practice.