



Tanya Lewis, CRCST
HSPA President

President's Message

When the Going Gets Tough, SP Gets Tougher

As I write this, many of us are still working under exceptionally challenging circumstances, many of which are driven by the lingering pandemic and future uncertainties. A growing number of healthcare organizations are facing unprecedented staffing and resource shortages, and that is certainly affecting our Sterile Processing departments (SPDs) and the professionals who work there.

I've heard from numerous HSPA members and SP peers who are feeling greater strain (both personally and professionally) and having to do more with less, which for some is translating to longer hours, increased stress and in some cases, greater risk. This has long been a common challenge for SP professionals and other healthcare workers, but it seems even more of a pervasive problem today. At the same time, I've found it humbling to hear how many of our fellow SP comrades are stepping up more than ever to ensure that customer service and patient safety are never sacrificed. We are hearing how managers are turning up the dial on staff education, certification and mentorship, and ensuring that their teams have the support and resources needed to tackle their many responsibilities as safely and efficiently as possible. Although many of us are emotionally and physically drained, we are still entering our departments each day with the understanding that what we do matters greatly to our healthcare customers and patients. We SP professionals don't have the luxury of "coasting" on the job or giving our tasks less than the full attention that's required, so we keep persevering and pushing our personal boundaries on what we can deliver in the name of quality and safety. And in the process, we continue to be led by data, standards and research.

Note: This issue's cover story features an HSPA exclusive follow-up interview with researchers from the Dec. 2, 2021, AJIC study that highlighted splash/droplet dispersal risks in the decontamination areas. Two of the study authors shared with HSPA steps that can be taken right now to help increase technician safety.

HSPA has long recognized how continuing education, staff certification, professional advocacy, and support weigh heavily into SP professionals' success. We also understand that education and support may look somewhat different in the era of COVID-19, which is why we are working harder than ever to meet our members and certification holders where they are by providing a mix of online and in-person educational offerings. Our upcoming 2022 Annual Conference in San Antonio allows those who are eager to get back to in-person events to network with peers, industry experts and vendors, and we also continue to broaden our educational resources in the online/virtual space. We'll be sharing more details about some of these latest offerings in the coming weeks.

Last but not least, HSPA continues to support the SP community in broader ways—through targeted advocacy and legislative initiatives to help educate lawmakers and the public about SP professionals' essential role in patient care, quality and safety; by offering guidance on how to advocate for the SPD within your own organizations through education and improved communication (visit www.myhspa.org for helpful resources, including a Standards Value Letter and sample documents to help enhance your own documents, policies and procedures); and through articles published in the pages of *PROCESS*, our *Insights* e-newsletter, and HSPA's other columns published in trade publications such as *Healthcare Purchasing News*, *Healthcare Hygiene Magazine*, *OR Today*, *Infection Control Today*, and more.

We know you will never stop working hard for your customers, patients and teammates—and HSPA will never stop working hard for you. When the going gets tough, we all remain strong in our commitment to doing what's right. Together, we will remain a formidable force in the quest for quality.

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