



Monique L. Jelks,
MSOL, CRCST
HSPA President

President's Message

Celebrate Our Profession by Exploring Past, Present & Future

Greetings, fellow healthcare Sterile Processing professionals! It's nearly that time of year again—Sterile Processing Week (SP Week)—where we celebrate our amazing profession and all the ways we contribute to patient care and quality outcomes.

If you haven't already begun thinking of thoughtful ways to recognize the dedicated technicians who process and manage instruments and equipment and educate others in our healthcare organizations and communities about the department's contributions, there's no better time to get started. This issue features inspirational messages and SP Week event planning ideas (see page 54), and HSPA offers free resources and downloadable items to help you honor your team and profession in style. This year's SP Week takes place October 13–19, so I encourage us all to carve out adequate time to plan meaningful celebratory and educational events. If we don't take time to honor our own profession, how can we expect others to do the same?

While pondering this message, I couldn't help but think about the history of our discipline and how far we have come. In the mid-1800s, the patriarch of sterility, pathologist and surgeon Joseph Lister of Britain, published an article in *The Lancet* (Sept. 21, 1867), "On the Antiseptic Principle in the Practice of Surgery", which shared his observations on how to give surgical patients better odds of surviving their procedures. During Dr. Lister's time as a surgeon, surgical patients had a slim chance of survival due to post-operative infections. Many patients lost their limbs or lives because there was no process for rendering surgical instruments safe after use. At that time, instruments were cleaned after procedures, stored, and then used on the next patient. Dr. Lister introduced to the world a process called antiseptic treatment that involved treating open wounds and surgical instruments with phenol (carbolic acid) to kill pathogenic microorganisms and, therefore, reduce the incidence of surgical site infections. Later, Louis Pasteur set the stage for how surgery is

performed, including how surgical instruments are sterilized before use. The work of these individuals (and many others who followed) helped shape the SP profession and the positive outcomes in our facilities today.

As we contemplate the present and future of our profession, it is essential that we explore new ways to honor ourselves, our teammates and our discipline as well as how we can improve our Sterile Processing departments (SPDs). Many of us have become great celebrators during SP Week but don't always continue our efforts throughout the year. Although it's undoubtedly important to give ourselves a well-deserved pat on the back during our dedicated week of honor, employee satisfaction and departmental morale increase when leaders consistently extend acknowledgments and express gratitude. We also can't afford to forget how appreciation for a job well done can lead to an increase in employee confidence, which can contribute to more knowledge growth and improved service outcomes, including error reduction.

No matter how large or small our SPDs may be and regardless of whether we are in leadership or on the frontline, we must take the time and opportunity to acknowledge the support and hard work of our teammates. We must reach beyond the walls of our departments to educate our facilities' leaders, other departments and even visitors and the general community about the many merits and contributions of our profession. Beyond that, we must actively support our fellow professionals through mentorship, patience, knowledge sharing and understanding.

A final good word: The light we hold must shine brightly for others to have a safe path to follow. Wishing you all a wonderful and memorable SP Week!

Monique L. Jelks, MSOL, CRCST