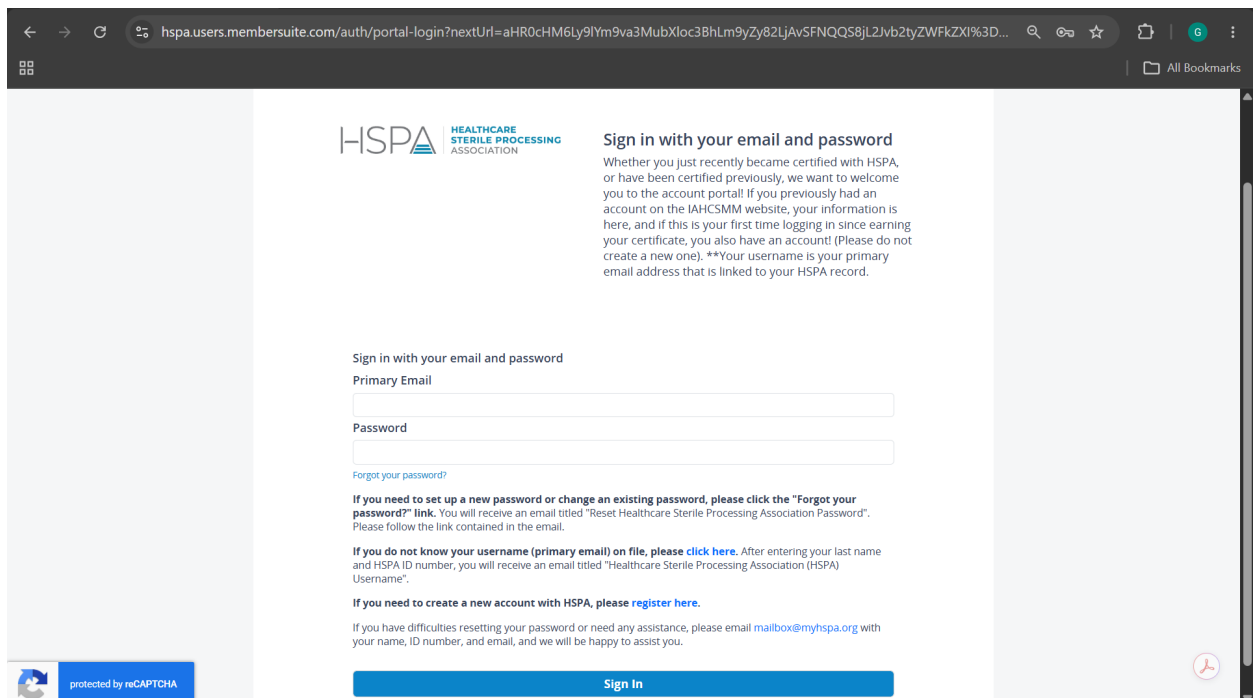
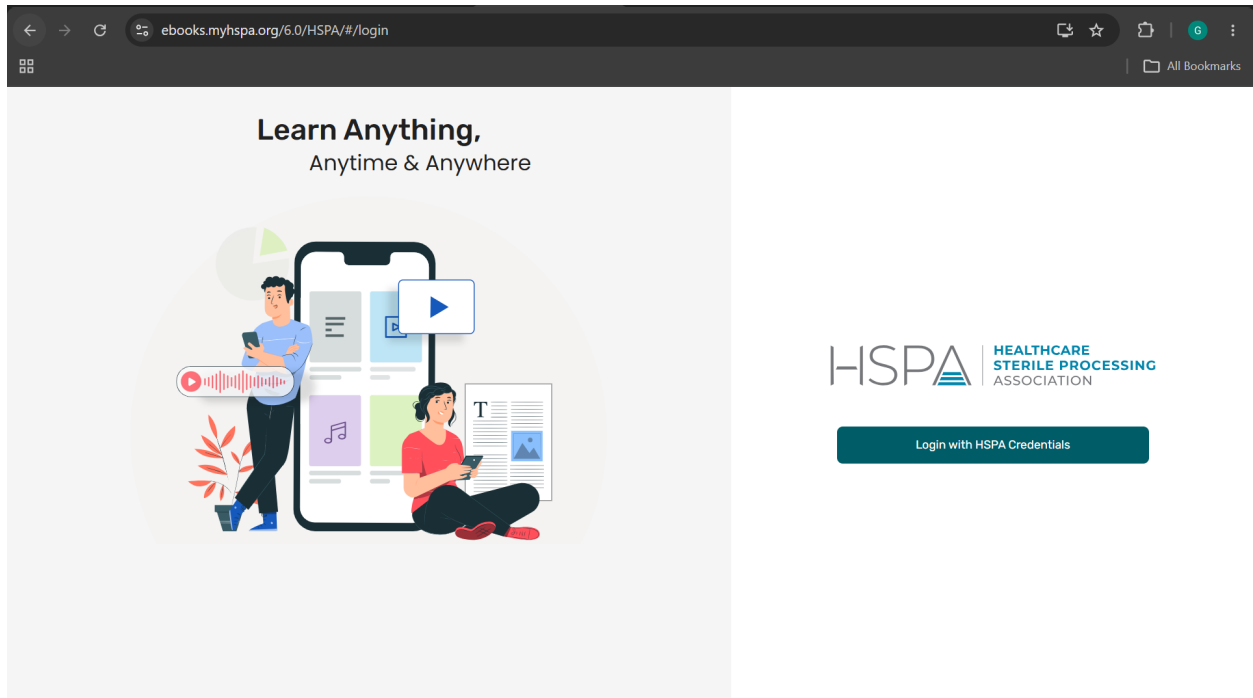
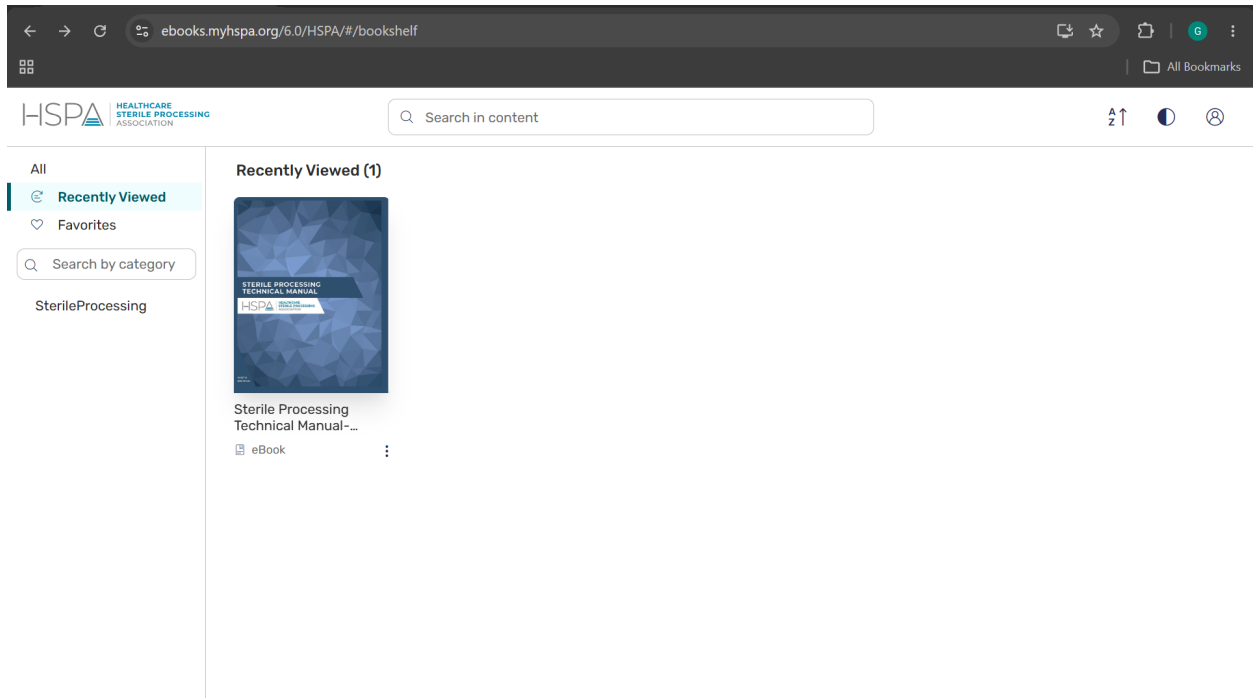


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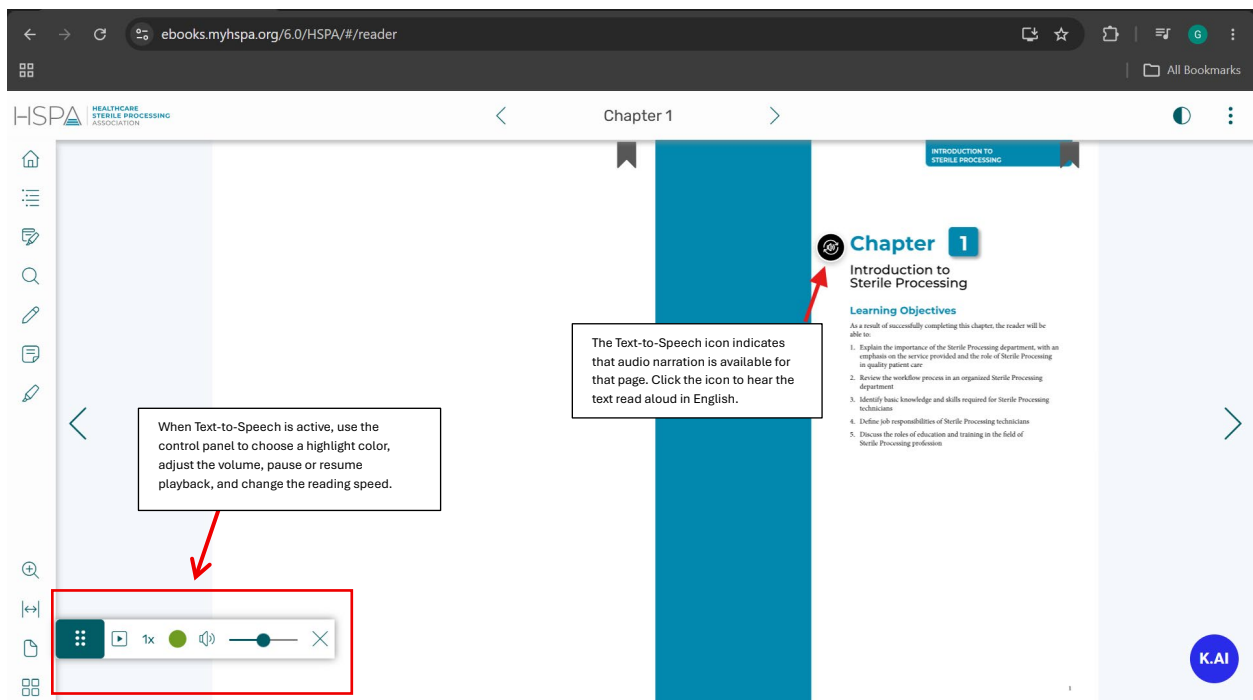


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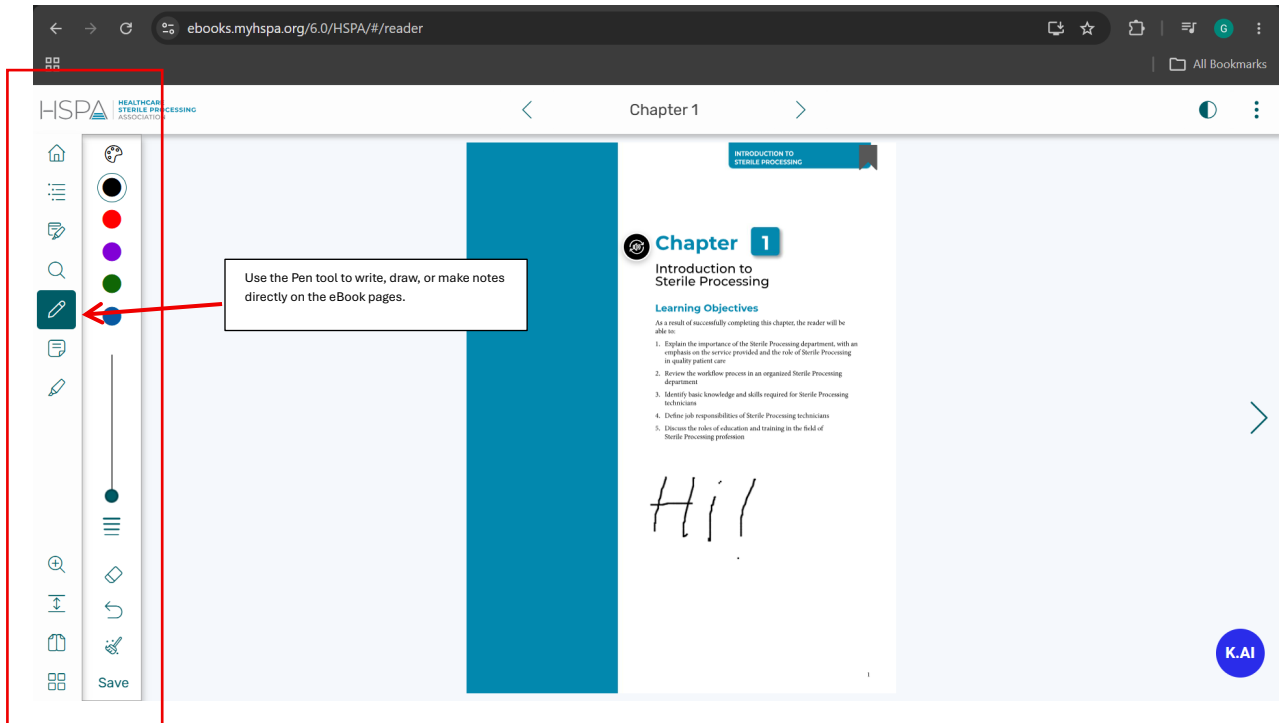


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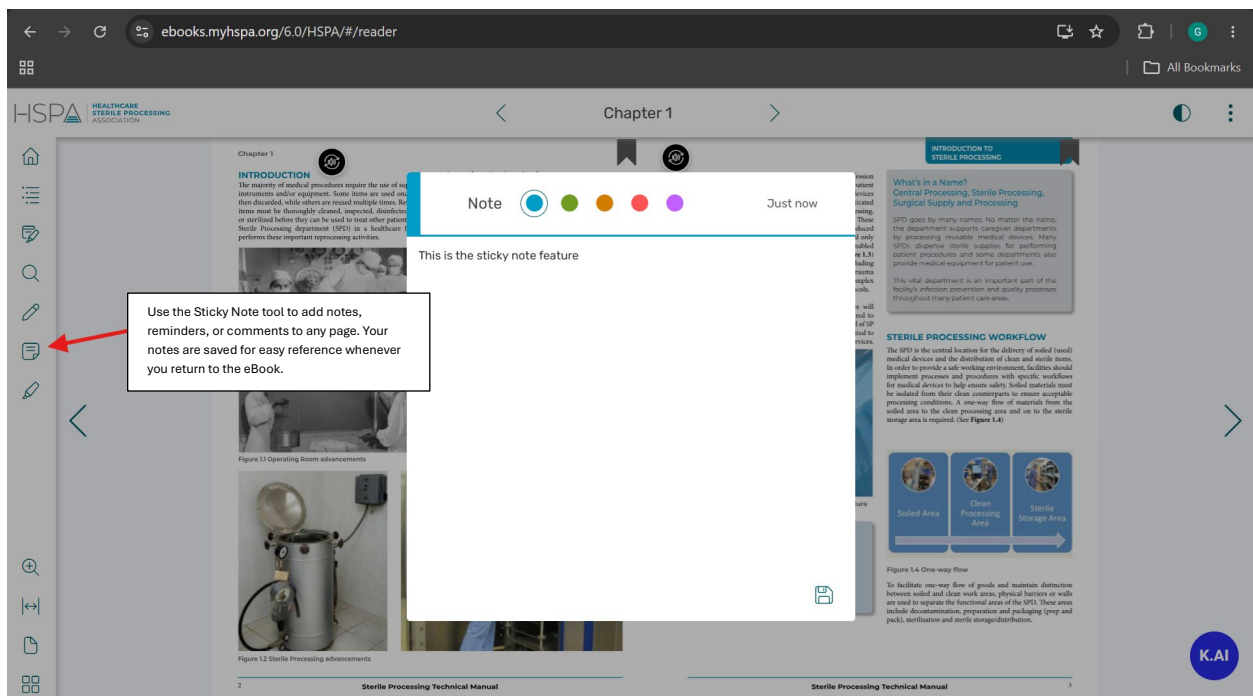
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION
The majority of medical procedures require the use of supplies, instruments and/or equipment. Some items are used once and then discarded, while others are reused multiple times. Reusable items must be thoroughly cleaned, inspected, disinfected and/or sterilized before they can be used to treat other patients. The Sterile Processing department (SPD) in a healthcare facility performs these important reprocessing activities.

Advancing Technologies
Medical technology is rapidly advancing. The medical devices used in the Operating Room (OR) and throughout the healthcare facility have changed dramatically over the years. (See Figure 1.1.) As these devices become more complex, the same can be said of the methods required to reprocess them. (See Figure 1.2.)

Figure 1.1 Operating Room advancements

Figure 1.2 Sterile Processing advancements

INTRODUCTION TO STERILE PROCESSING

What's in a Name? Central Processing, Sterile Processing, Surgical Supply and Processing

SPD goes by many names. No matter the name, the department supports various departments by processing reusable medical devices. Many SPDs dispense sterile supplies, perform patient procedures and sterilize instruments; also provide medical equipment for patient use.

This vital department is an important part of the facility's infection prevention and quality processes throughout many patient care areas.

STERILE PROCESSING WORKFLOW

The SPD is the central location for the delivery of solid (used) medical devices and the distribution of clean and sterile items. In order to provide a safe working environment, facilities should implement processes and procedures with specific workflows for medical devices to help ensure safety. Solid materials must be isolated from their clean counterparts to ensure acceptable processing conditions. A one-way flow of materials from the solid area to the clean processing area and on to the sterile storage area is required. (See Figure 1.4.)

Figure 1.3 Example of a minimally invasive procedure (arthroscopy)

Minimally Invasive Surgery (MIS) A surgical procedure performed in a manner that causes little or no trauma or injury to the patient. It is often performed through a cannula using lasers, endoscopes or laparoscopes. Compared with other procedures, minimally invasive procedures involve smaller incisions, less tissue damage and bleeding, smaller amounts of anesthesia, less pain and minimal scarring.

Figure 1.4 One-way flow

To facilitate one-way flow of goods and maintain distinction between solid and clean work areas, physical barriers or walls are used to separate the functional areas of the SPD. These areas include decontamination, preparation and packaging (prep and pack), distribution and sterile storage/distribution.

Sterile Processing Technical Manual

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Chapter 1

Figure 1.9 Packaging process

Administrative (OSHA) safety requirements, SP technicians must wear special attire, called **personal protective equipment (PPE)**. PPE minimizes exposure to biohazard pathogens and other contaminants. PPE includes a fluid-resistant (leakproof) eye protection, a fluid-resistant cover gown, general purpose utility gloves and fluid-resistant shoe covers.

Personal protective equipment (PPE) A part of Standard Precautions for all healthcare workers to prevent skin and mucous membrane exposure when in contact with blood and body fluids of any patient. PPE includes fluid-resistant protective clothing, disposable gloves, eye protection, face masks and shoe covers.

Preparation and Packaging

After items are safe for handling, they are delivered to the prep and pack area of the SPD. Each item should be carefully inspected for cleanliness, proper function and possible defects. Instruments and other devices should be inspected, packaged and labeled in preparation for sterilization.

SP technicians must be able to identify thousands of surgical instruments. They must understand how instruments are manufactured, how they are constructed, how to use them and how to best maintain them. It is essential that SP professionals have the knowledge and training to maintain instruments properly, consistently and safely. (Figure 1.7 and 1.8 provide examples of inspection and assembly activities.)

Sterilization

Items to be sterilized must be properly identified and the correct methods and parameters for sterilization must be followed according to the manufacturer's **instructions for use (IFU)**. The principles necessary to achieve sterilization must be understood and applied. Sterilizers must be loaded and operated properly, and distribution quality assurance measures must be followed to help ensure that sterilization parameters have been met. Records must be maintained, and SP technicians must be aware of factors that can compromise sterile packaging. (See Figure 1.10)

Sterilization Process by which all forms of microbial life, including bacteria, viruses, spores and fungi, are completely destroyed.

Instructions for use (IFU) Information provided by a device manufacturer that provides detailed instructions on how to properly use and/or process the device.

Personnel working in the preparation, packaging and sterilization areas of SP must wear facility-required attire such as a scrub suit and hair covering. It is essential that SP technicians diligently adhere to dress codes and safe work practices to protect the environment from contamination.

Figure 1.10 Examples of sterilization activities

Sterile Storage and Distribution

The supply area of SP is dedicated to the storage of sterile instruments and clean or sterile supplies. A separate area for removing supplies from shipping cartons and containers should be provided. The major portion of the work in this area involves moving, sorting and dispensing supplies and sterile instruments. (See Figure 1.11)

Figure 1.11 Sterile storage areas

While items may be dispensed to almost all departments within a healthcare facility, the major focus of this area is servicing the

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INTRODUCTION TO
STERILE PROCESSING



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