

## J30 Sponge Counting

July 2009

Intro: It happens in approximately one out of every six thousand operations. A surgical team unintentionally leaves something such as a sponge inside of a patient. Doctors at Mayo Clinic want to make sure that doesn't happen. They're using grocery store bar code technology to account for all sponges, in hopes of reducing errors in the operating room.

### **Video**

**Total running time 1:17**

**CG :05 to :09**

**James Clark**

**Mayo Clinic nurse educator**

**CG :15 to :25**

**Robert Cima, M.D.**

**Mayo Clinic surgeon**

### **Audio**

"5"

FIVE SPONGES ACCOUTED FOR  
AND READY FOR USE IN THIS  
OPERATION.

"THE LONGER CASES, YOU MIGHT  
RUN THROUGH MANY MANY PACKS  
OF SPONGES, UPWARDS OF 200  
TO 300 SPONGES."

AND ON RARE OCCASIONS ONE  
CAN GET LEFT BEHIND.

"AND WHAT WE FOUND WAS IT'S  
JUST A PROBLEM WITH HUMAN  
ERROR IN THE SENSE OF WHEN  
YOU HAVE A COMPLEX  
ENVIRONMENT AND YOU'RE  
TYRING TO COUNT SOMETHING,

SOMETIMES A SIMPLE MATH  
MISTAKE HAPPENS AND IT  
RESULTS IN A RETAINED SPONGE.”

SO TO COMBAT THIS RARE, BUT  
REAL PROBLEM, DR. ROBERT CIMA  
EQUIPPED HIS O.R. WITH BAR  
CODE TECHNOLOGY. HE WANTS  
TO BE SURE THAT ANY SPONGE  
THAT GOES IN (“5” )COMES OUT.  
“IT KEEPS A LEDGER OF HOW  
MANY SPONGES WE’VE COUNTED  
IN AND COUNTED OUT.”

THE TECHNOLOGY’S SIMILAR TO  
WHAT THEY USE IN THE GROCERY  
STORE CHECK OUT LINE WHICH IS  
VERY ACCURATE. THERE’S ONLY  
ONE MISTAKE FOR EVERY  
SEVERAL MILLION SWIPES OF THE  
BAR CODE. EVEN SO, DR. CIMA’S  
TEAM CONTINUES TO MANUALLY  
COUNT EVERY SPONGE AND  
RECORD THE NUMBERS ON A

**Standup**  
**CG: 45 to :54**  
**Vivien Williams**  
**Reporting**

WHITE BOARD. BAR CODE  
TECHNOLOGY IS PART OF THE  
CHECKS AND BALANCES USED TO  
REDUCE ERRORS AND IMPROVE  
SAFETY FOR EVERY PATIENT WHO  
COMES INTO THIS OPERATING  
ROOM.  
“THAT’S REALLY THE ADVANTAGE  
OF THE TECHNOLOGY. IT’S  
RELIABLE, IT’S SAFE. IT’S SIMPLE  
TECHNOLOGY.”  
FOR MEDICAL EDGE, I’M VIVIEN  
WILLIAMS.

Anchor tag:

Dr. Cima wants to remind you that leaving an object behind in a patient is a very rare occurrence. But if it does happen the retained object can cause problems such as pain and infections. He says bar code technology will help reduce these types of errors in the operating room.

He’s also looking at technologies to help track other surgical instruments used in the O.R. such as needles and clamps.

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