Importance of communication between hospital staffs and contractors

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[Introduction]
In Japan, there is a system established by the country that entrusts part of hospital operations to an outside contractor. External contractors must be certified in accordance with this system when entrusting hospital services. However, just because you are accredited does not mean that you have built a trusting relationship with hospital staff. I have been working in the Central sterile supply department (CSSD) since 2005, and the relationship with hospital staff has changed dramatically during this time. It is not a good relationship at the time of assignment, but it is now a good relationship. We believe that good relationships and maintenance of hospital staff and contractors are sometimes referred to as an important item in the business-level assessment of CSSD. Considering the relationship between hospital staff and contractors based on previous experience.

[What the contractor needs to gain trust in the hospital]
What influences the quality management of CSSD. Of course, cleaning and sterilization is important. Sterility assurance is important, CSSD manual, infection control, all are important, But I think communication is very important. Why communication is so important? Especially for contractors like us, Building a good relationship with hospital staffs working together such as
- OR nurses
- CSSD staffs
- infection control team
- hospital administration
is a key because we need to consult with them immediately when something goes wrong or issues happened. So how to foster communication and collaboration with hospital staffs. Based on my experience, there are three key points.

1) We need to be a professional of CSSD
To be a professional of CSSD, We train our staffs as an expert of each CSSD workflow process, for example, cleaning, sterilization, assembly, etc. Then introduce each expert with his or her picture and tell, appropriate contact window and contact hours. so that hospital staffs understand whom and when they contact for what. Also, we report how many instruments were reprocessed, and how many cycles run like washer disinfectors or sterilizers. So visualization of CSSD workload. Our CSSD director uses that data to submit to the hospital executive conference. That leads to show output of our work properly and leads to propose
- purchase or renewal of equipment
- renewal of contract

2) To create a good rhythm and culture for mutual understanding and information sharing
We do have a monthly communication meeting with OR nurses to discuss issues or troubles happened between two departments and how to improve. We also have bi-weekly CSSD leaders meeting with director, assistant director, and head nurse to discuss incident and accident happened and how to prevent. In addition, in order to let other people know what we do at CSSD, We plan a training session for OR nurses, and we publish CSSD news a few times per year.

3) Research mindset
Many troubles happen in CSSD. We deal with it by research mindset as a professional of CSSD. I mean, starting from identification of the trouble, then root cause investigation. Of course we work together with hospital staffs, so collaborate with them to figure out why it happens. Then, find out improvement plan and implement it. After implementation, we evaluate if issues are fixed by that plan. During this phase, good relationship with hospital staffs is made like as team building. After the whole troubleshooting process is done, we try to submit our work to academic conferences to present or publish as literature. We believe this should be a good opportunity for visibility and recognition for both of us as co-authors and contribute to good reputation of the hospital. Then finally hospital staffs trust us as contractor, as a professional of CSSD.

[Summary]
There are three key important points for communication in order to achieve quality management in CSSD
- to be a professional of CSSD
- rhythm and culture for mutual understanding and information sharing
- research mindset
Especially for contractors like us to build a good relationship with hospital staffs with full of trust, Based on my experiences, those are really key points, and I believe those are connected with better patient safety.