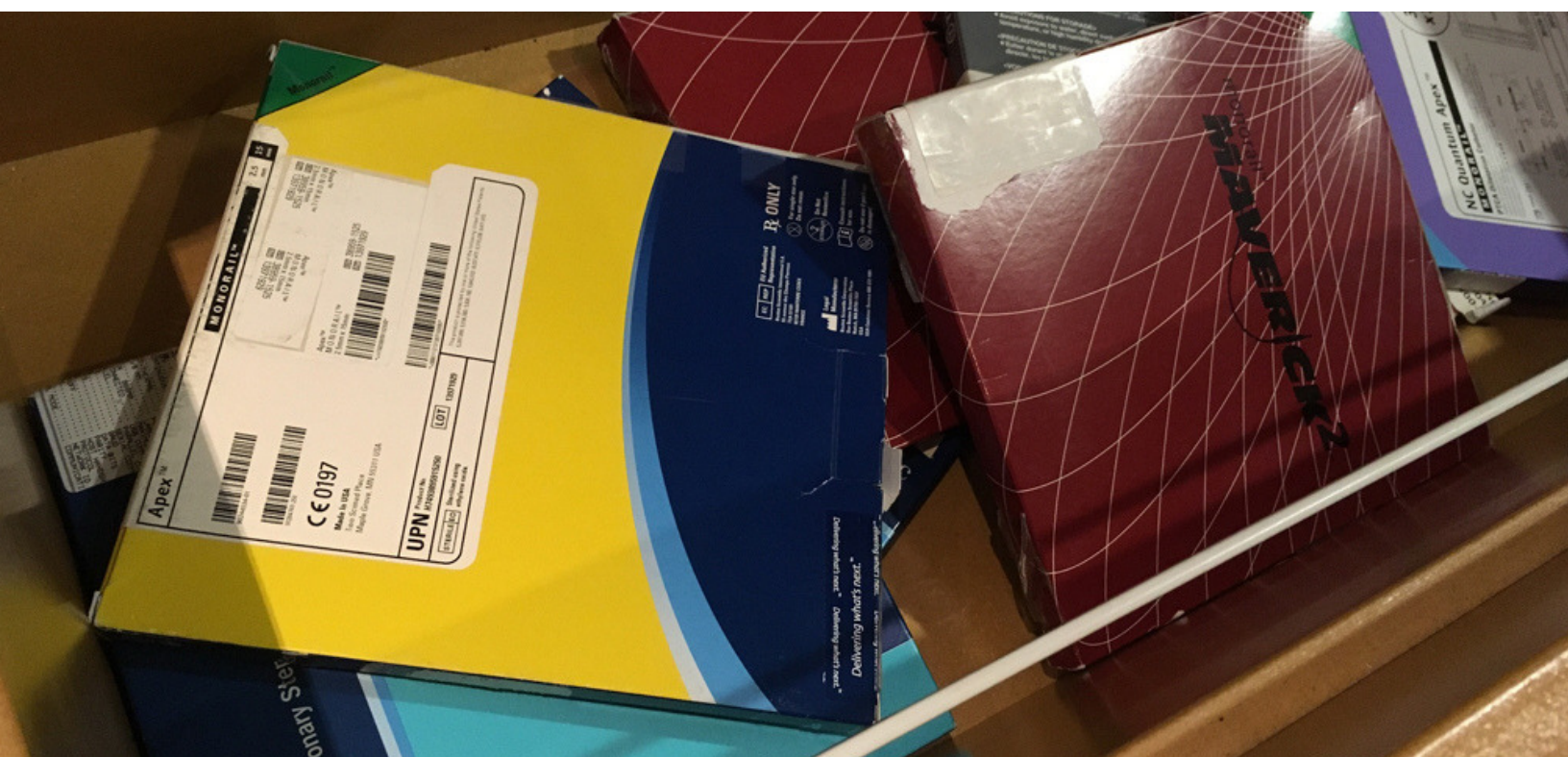# How to Use Data to Get Lean With Supplies And Increase Patient Safety

We've all seen it (and maybe even done it ourselves) – thousands of dollars of supplies tucked away in our desks, filing cabinets, ceilings, wherever we can find a secret space.

This isn't a practice intended to waste hospital dollars, it's done with the best intention – patient safety.

When a patient needs a certain supply to keep them alive, it just has to be in stock. But when this "just in case" inventory is tucked away or stocked on shelves, a lot of unnecessary waste is created for the hospital.

How Overstocked Supplies Waste a Hospital's Resources

It wastes money. When staff overstocks supplies, they actually create a strain on hospital finances in many ways. The most prominent way cash is affected is the increase in the amount of dollars the hospital spends to keep its shelves stocked. Excess inventory stocking means that the hospital is having to invest more dollars in on-the-shelf inventory than is actually

required. On the flip side, if team members are able to reduce the stocking levels of supplies, they're doing the equivalent of writing a check back to the hospital that they can spend in more productive ways.

It's a basic rule that the more supplies that are kept, the more often supplies will expire. Unfortunately, expiration of supplies is something that is hard to completely eliminate due to the requirement to keep so many sizes and varieties of supplies on hand to best serve patients. But if an inflated level of inventory is being carried beyond what is truly needed, the problem is only being exacerbated.

It wastes time. Typically, managing supplies requires a lot of manual processes. Staff has to comb through inventory daily to "eyeball" the amount of inventory they need to re-order. So if excess inventory is kept on hand, staff is spending more time deciding what to order every day because they're checking more supplies than are actually required. If the number of supplies is reduced, team members are able to get back to patient care instead of spending excessive time on administrative tasks.

Checking for expiration of supplies can also eat up a lot of staff time. Most hospitals have some method to try to reduce the daily burden – like stacking items on the shelf according to expiration date or using stickers to signal items that have an expiration upcoming. But if too many medical devices are being stocked, the daily burden on staff to manage the expiring ones is increased, and the likelihood that an item will expire will also increase.

We've all seen staff search frantically through hundreds or thousands of supplies looking for the exact one they need for a patient on the table. The more excess inventory that is stocked, the more time staff spend looking for that needle in a haystack. We can help out our fellow team members by reducing the amount of unnecessary items that we keep in stock, so in those critical moments when a particular item is desperately needed, they can locate it more easily.

It wastes space. It's simple, supplies take up physical space. But why should we worry about taking up extra space with unnecessary inventory? That space that is being occupied unnecessarily by supplies is taking away space from more productive uses. For example, if the number of supplies across a hospital is reduced by 25% and the remaining inventory is consolidated into a smaller space, the saved space can literally be returned to the hospital. That extra space can be turned into a new revenue-generating lab or can be converted in to an additional recovery or waiting area to increase the comfort of patients. This is a win for patient satisfaction on top of the financial benefits associated with reducing inventory.

There's a better way: automation

Nearly every industry has turned to automation to drive financial and operational improvements in their supply chain, however many hospitals are still manually tracking millions of dollars of supplies and implants or using other antiquated systems. Mobile Aspects' iRISupply software helps clinicians automate the way they manage their supplies, allowing them to spend more time on patient care.

iRISupply utilizes RFID technology to track the location and usage of supplies and implants at the item level and in real-time. You'll know exactly which supplies you have on hand and their exact location – no more stress-filled searches. At the point of use, the systems document exactly which items are used on which patients. With this real-time documentation, you'll know exactly which supplies you need to order each day to keep your inventory levels stable.

These systems also generate a lot of valuable data that can be turned into actionable insights. You now have access to the exact usage information for all of your supplies. Over time, you will get a picture of the "safe" amount of inventory you need to keep on hand – just enough to make sure you have the supplies you need when you need them. Your stocking levels for some items may go up based on the data, while a majority will go down. The typical procedural area of a hospital can expect to reduce at least 20% of their inventory by analyzing such data.

Using iRISupply will provide so many operational and financial benefits to your department. You can return money, time and space back to your hospital, and increase employee and patient satisfaction in the process. You'll also have access to analytics and customizable filters, that will reduce tasks that used to take hours to just minutes.

Reducing Inventory Levels With iRISupply

Clinical staff document all of their supply usage automatically using RFID – no additional manual keystrokes or button clicks required

iRISupply analyzes all transactions and starts to build predictive models of how much inventory is needed to sustain current levels of business

iRISupply turns data into analytics that show areas of improvement for your department, including how to reduce stocking levels

Mobile Aspects experts will sit down with your team at least quarterly to review data and make recommendations on where to reduce stocking levels to return money to your department