

HOSPITALS NEED EFFICIENT ORDERPICKING, TOO

Healthcare facilities are turning to proven material handling systems to improve inventory control.

"...we now carry more I.V.'s in two-thirds the space required for our former conventional storage racks."

A gravity flow rack system has enabled University Hospital to keep inventory fresh, to speed order filling and to reduce storage space.

University Hospital at Stony Brook, opened in 1980, is part of the State University of New York's (SUNY) Health Sciences Center, and is a major component in a unique regional healthcare plan serving Long Island, New York.

James W. Conklin, Director of Purchasing, discussed a recent innovation in the hospital's handling and storing of I.V. and formula cartons (mostly liquids). The new system is based on a gravity flow order selection system (Keneco Inc.) typically used in industry.

"We find that this system ensures fresh inventory, which is critical to hospital operations," said Mr. Conklin. He explained that cartons can be opened at night and placed in the system located in the Central Sterile Supply area. This system saves space, and it becomes easier and faster to select items ordered by the pharmacy, nursing and ambulatory care units.

The system consists of a series of gravity flow racks, each with 63" front, 8ft. high, and 7ft. deep, with inclined shelves supporting a series of rugged tracks incorporating wheels on 1-1/2" centers for optimum load flow. The system is loaded from the rear; the incline, wheels, and gravity ensure that cases in a lane are always flush with -



At Central Sterile Supply, cases of I.V.'s are opened and placed in a gravity flow rack. Orderpickers select items and place them on carts for distribution to pharmacy, nursing and abulatory care units.

and easily accessible from - the picking (front) side.

University Hospital has installed these systems in two areas: eight units in Hospital Receiving, where full cases are stored on six shelves/unit until needed at Exchange Cart Area and in Central Sterile

"...we save manpower in ordering and stocking, because now we order once or twice a week instead of daily."

CASE STUDY - HOSPITAL STORAGE

Supply. Here the cases are opened before being loaded into a five unit system, each with 5 "knuckled shelves," which make the contents of the first carton accessible.

Richard Anderson, Assistant Director, Materials Management, Hospital Receiving and Stores said that "the new system is very easy to work with. All items are dated, and the system assures 'first in, first out.' We now carry a one to two weeks' supply and deliver most items to Central Sterile supply only twice a week, instead of every day, as in the past."

"Before we installed this system, we had to physically move each carton several times to ensure 'first in, first out.' Now they move themselves on the gravity flow shelves. We are able now to handle more stock without increasing personnel, and there is no possibility of 'burying' a carton and not coming across it again until after expiration."

Kathleen Quinn, Associate Director, Central Sterile Supply (cart area), has much to say about how the new system functions in her area. "First, it has completely solved any stock rotation problems. Second, because access to an item is easier - due to open cases on the five inclined shelves of each unit - it is faster to accurately service our pharmacy, nursing and ambulatory care units. Here we load 50 carts, seven days a week, plus 16 modules once each weekend for our clinics. Incidentally, the tallest girl on our evening shift is only 5'2", yet they have no difficulty in reaching product on the shelves. Third, we now carry more I.V.'s in two-thirds the space required for our



At Hospital Receiving, full cases of I.V.'s and formulas are picked from a gravity flow rack to fill an order from the hospital's Central Sterile Supply.

former conventional storage racks. Fourth, we save manpower in ordering and stocking, because now we order once or twice a week instead of daily. And by counting the number of empty positions in the rear of the system, we can easily determine what we need and when we need it. Finally, our area is a great deal neater as a result of the gravity flow system."

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