

Communiqué

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Triple Crown CERTIFICATION

How One CS Department is Winning the Race
for Quality, Safety and Professionalism



International CS Week

PAGE 62

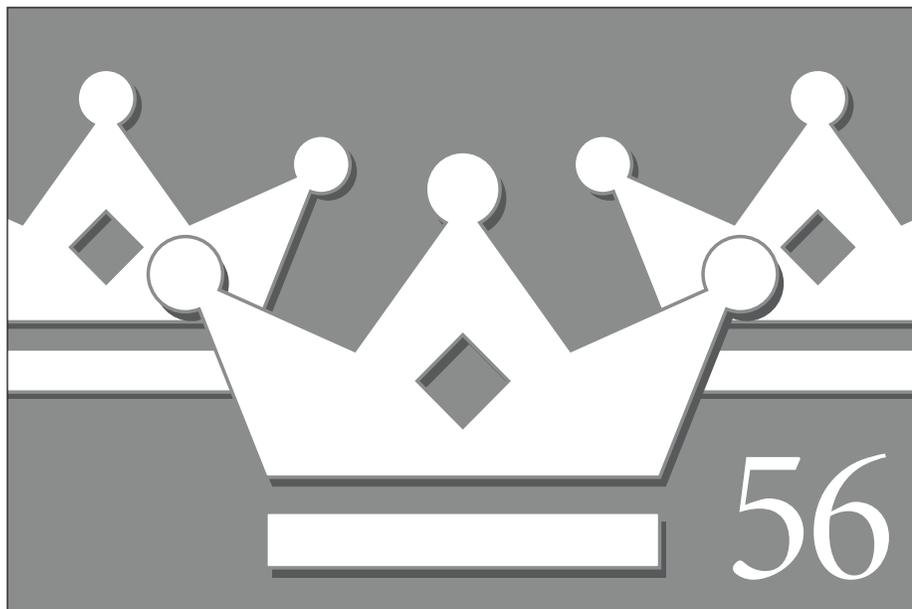
Mentoring and
Succession Planning:
Great Leaders Plan Ahead

PAGE 70

Ask The Experts

PAGE 86

Features



Triple Crown Certification: How One CS Department is Winning the Race for Quality, Safety and Professionalism

Certification isn't just about fulfilling hospital or state requirements. When used to its fullest advantage, it also opens doors for professional advancement and positive outcomes.

24

CIS Self-Study Lesson Plan

Ophthalmic Instrumentation

32

CHL Self-Study Lesson Plan

Central Service Leaders
Manage Special Projects: Part II

40

CRCST Self-Study Lesson Plan

Rigid Laryngoscopes

48

Nursing Self-Study Lesson Plan

Creating and Maintaining
Correct Instrument Sets



IAHCSMM
55 W. Wacker Dr., Suite 501,
Chicago, IL 60601
800.962.8274 | Fax: 312.440.9474
www.iahcsmm.org
Email: mailbox@iahcsmm.org

ANNUAL CONFERENCE & EXPO SCHEDULE

April 24-27, 2016
Grand Hyatt/San Antonio
Convention Center
San Antonio, TX
(Pre-conference events
available April 23, 2016)

May 7-10, 2017
Gaylord Opryland Resort &
Convention Center
Nashville, TN
(Pre-conference events
available May 6, 2017)

April 29-May 2, 2018
Phoenix Convention Center
Phoenix, AZ
(Pre-conference events available
April 28, 2018)

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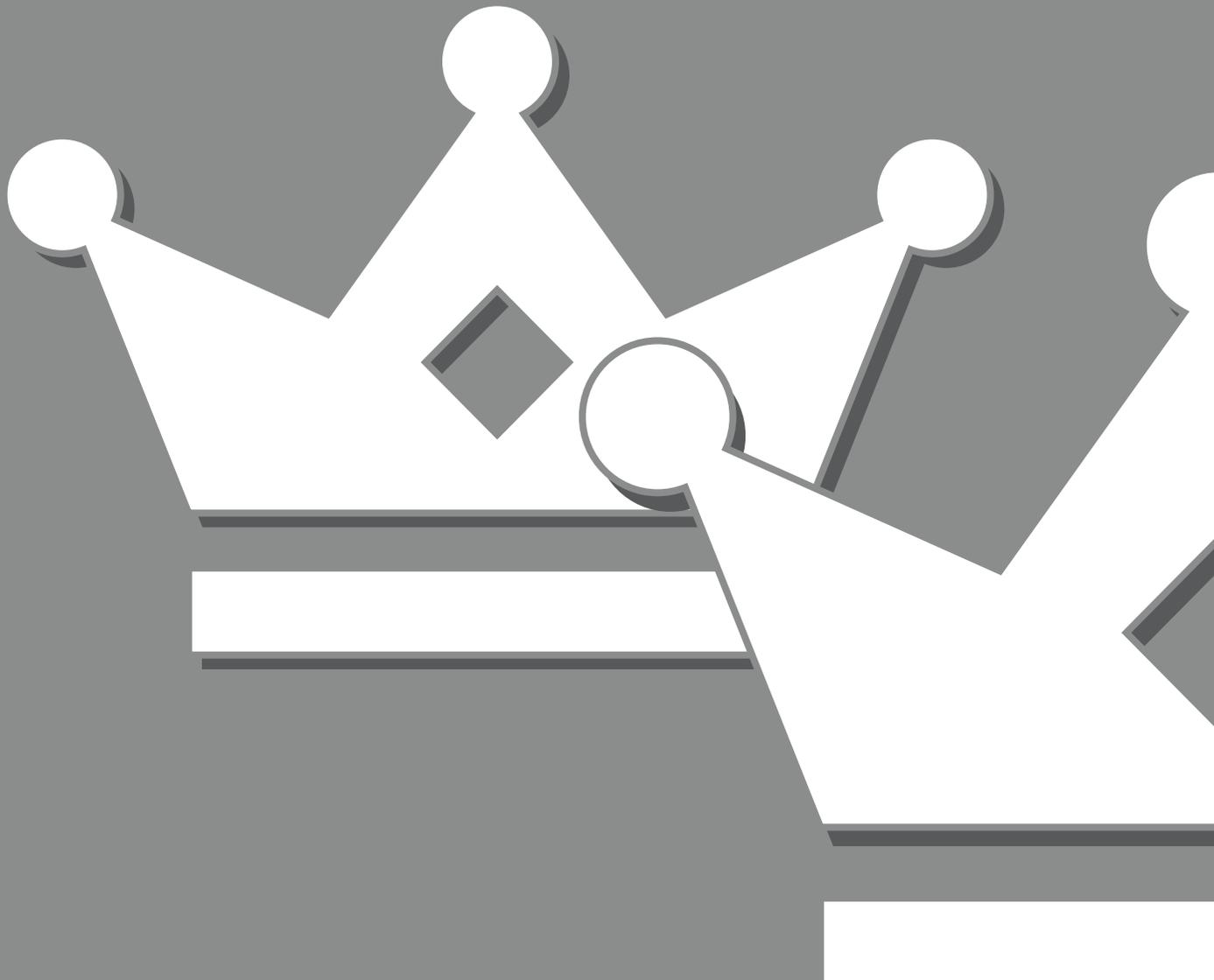
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Triple Crown CERTIFICATION

HOW ONE CS DEPARTMENT IS WINNING THE RACE
FOR QUALITY, SAFETY AND PROFESSIONALISM





by Julie E. Williamson,
IAHCMM Editor/Communications Director
julie@iahcsmm.org

*A*lthough three states in the nation currently require certification of Central Service (CS) technicians, a growing number of facilities across the country aren't just waiting for their states to pass such legislation. Instead, they are working intently at the facility level to ensure that all CS staff are certified – a decision rooted in the pursuit of quality, professionalism and patient safety. Some facilities aren't stopping at the Certified Registered Central Service Technician (CRCST) designation, either. Instead, they're encouraging staff to further up the professional ante by attaining two other certifications offered by IAHCMM: the Certified Instrument Specialist (CIS) and Certified in Healthcare Leadership (CHL).





The CS department at Jewish Hospital in Louisville, Ky, is one such example. The quality-focused team, which processes instrumentation for the 362-bed, high-tech tertiary referral center, is comprised of 33 employees – 27 of whom, thus far, have attained their CRCST certification, 14 of whom have gone on to become Certified Instrument Specialists, and another nine who have received the CHL designation. Even more impressive, eight have earned all three certifications (with another poised to reach the ranks at the end of July) – an accomplishment that Jewish Hospital recognizes as “Triple Crown” status.

“The ultimate impetus for cultivating a certification mindset in our department was born out of the realization that our jobs are too important to patient safety and physician satisfaction for us to rely on arbitrary competencies as a gauge of technician growth,” said Weston “Hank” Balch, CRCST, CIS, CHL, director of sterile processing operations at Jewish Hospital & University of Louisville Hospital. According to Balch, staffing had previously been a challenge, with half the department comprised of contract traveling staff, which created instability and lack of service continuity. Additionally, the department consistently experienced challenges with staff competencies and turnover, and there was distrust between CS and Operating Room (OR) staff – so much so that most critical items were being decontaminated and packaged by nursing staff and only sent down to the CS department for sterilization.

JOCKEYING FOR PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT

Positive change was set in motion in 2011 when Jewish Hospital began requiring CRCST certification within 15 months of employee hire date. For the next couple years, the leadership team



Front L-R: Valerie Goralski, Odessa Macklin, Shirley Raque, Arlene Scisney, Abigail Henderson
Middle L-R: John Rowe, Luis Barsallo, Miles Brinley, Yasmin Tumbarell Arguelles, Daniel Brackett, Daniel Gnagy, John Tyler Hayden
Back L-R: Weston (Hank) Balch, Kyle Berry, Onur Tekin, Irvin Francis Kyle III, Christopher Coupland, Emily Stivers, Bekira Mehmedovic, Joel Bengel, Robert Parker, Garreck Gabbard

highlighted why certification mattered to patients and team members in the OR. As staff began to see themselves more and more as professionals, their commitment to industry growth and skill development soared. As Balch explained, technicians scoured the Internet for sterile processing videos, purchased their own study materials from IAHCSSM, and held impromptu study sessions for the CRCST exam. Then, in summer 2014, the “Triple Crown” certification initiative got underway – complete with a trophy ceremony and interdisciplinary recognition – to further motivate CRCST technicians to pursue both CIS and CHL certifications.

It didn’t take long for physicians, OR managers, staff, and hospital administrators to take notice.

“No longer was it just SPD staff getting their required CRCST certification. It was a wave of technicians and SPD leaders pursuing additional certifications on their own accord, all in the name of greater professionalism and higher quality care for our patients,” recalled Balch. Quality indicators further underscored the positive change. From the third quarter

of Fiscal Year 2013 to present day, the department’s set error rates have dropped from 0.19% to 0.07%, and the number of missing instruments from total inventory fell from 1,974 to 0.

Education and training is so ingrained in the department that CS staff don’t let a day go by without learning something new or sharing their knowledge with others. Aside from promoting a culture of teamwork and accountability for service excellence and professional growth, the facility created an Integrated Certification Training Matrix – a structured reading schedule aimed at weaving certification training into the everyday life of a new technician. After requiring CRCST certification, Balch said it became apparent that the quality of training during a new employee’s 90-day orientation period could vary significantly, depending upon which shift a technician worked or who was precepting them. Aside from that, the department fielded calls from a number of smaller sister facilities that were having difficulty adequately training new hires, and they sought assistance to help cover the training basics. To assist technicians



in attaining certification as soon as possible after their 90-day orientation period, the Matrix, which is aligned with the IAHCSSM Central Service Technical Manual, complements what technicians are learning on the floor. A copy of the Technical Manual is given to each new hire and preceptor. Time is allocated each day to work on the Matrix, and the technician then dates and initials the sections they read before taking it to the preceptor to sign.

“The training holes our staff had experienced nearly vanished overnight. They were replaced by great questions prompted by new-hires’ reading that allow preceptors to go more in-depth on various issues, or double back for additional clarification of something that was missed,” Balch said. Aside from ensuring that technicians make it through the entire Technical Manual prior to the end of the 90-day orientation period, the Matrix serves as a valuable addition to the employee competencies that are files away for future visits by The Joint Commission.

“The concept worked so well that we later had individual preceptors making up their own training matrices for individual assignment areas,” Balch continued.

TECHNICIANS TAPPING OPPORTUNITY

Not only has the pursuit of certification and continuing education led to improved customer service and more positive patient outcomes, it’s also helped technicians see their roles from a wider lens. That enhanced view has led to staff to see greater career opportunities within the profession.

When staff member John Rowe, CRCST, CIS, CHL, first entered the world of CS, he lacked previous healthcare experience and had a multitude of questions about the discipline. CRCST certification gave him the opportunity to learn the answers to those questions



TRIPLE CROWN RECIPIENTS
Front L-R: John Rowe [Instrument Coordinator], Shirley Raque [Quality Assurance Specialist], Arlene Scisney [SPD Tech II], Robert Parker [SPD Supervisor]; Back: Irvin Francis Kyle III [SPD Tech II]
Not Pictured: Weston (Hank) Balch [Director of Sterile Processing Operations], Karen Owens [PRN], Kyle Berry, Tech II

and also challenged him to ask more. He endeavored to learn all he could, so he could be a knowledgeable resource for co-workers. Over the course of this journey toward professional growth, he was able to attain his CHL certification and land a supervisor position within the department. And he didn’t stop there.

“I pursued the CIS certification, which then led me to the role of Instrument Coordinator. Now, I’m in the position to work closely with the surgeons and other OR staff, sales representatives, and the SPD, and I’m able to address issues that arise concerning instrumentation, surgeon preferences, departmental and budgetary requirements, and so on,” Rowe said. “Obtaining each certification has provided me with an opportunity to grow, learn and advance in Sterile Processing, and also be able to share the knowledge I’ve gained.”

Sterile Processing Supervisor Robert Parker, CRCST, CIS, CHL, has also seen his career trajectory soar through



Daniel Brackett

certification and continuing education. When he first entered the department as a brand-new technician, he was trained how to inspect and assemble surgical instruments, but he said it was only through the Central Service Technical Manual that he learned crucial skills, such as a better understanding of medical terminology, regulating agencies, decontamination best practices, and inventory management techniques. Two years after attaining his CRCST, he earned his CIS certification.



L-R: Yasmin Tumbarell Arguelles, Shirley Raque



Arlene Scisney



Foreground: Odessa Macklin
Background L-R: Arlene Scisney, Daniel Brackett, Robert Parker

“It changed the way I inspect surgical instruments,” he noted. “I began looking for the primary inspection points detailed in the book.”

As a supervisor, Parker then pursued the CHL certification, which further allowed him to cultivate his skills in employee coaching and departmental benchmarking. “There’s no doubt that the applied knowledge from the ‘Triple Crown’ of IAHCSSM certifications has contributed to my success in Sterile Processing. At Jewish Hospital, the Triple Crown certification initiative has impacted our culture and service.

We have technicians in our department who think and perform like supervisors, and they inspire others to grow in their knowledge and skill sets.”

Despite its many accomplishments in successfully improving the CS team’s professionalism and service delivery, the department refuses to rest on its laurels. Three additional projects were developed to further advance the department’s knowledge-building quest. The Sterile Processing LeAPE Leadership Training Program is a semester-based training program that allows CS technicians who are interested in becoming future

leaders to gain hands-on leadership experience under the mentorship of current CS leaders. Along with a number of leadership-related resources, this program requires completion of the CHL to graduate the course. Currently, two technicians are enrolled.

Through a project called SPD Professional Development Days, staff from multiple facilities gather on designated Saturday mornings to discuss resume-crafting techniques and work on professional image development (i.e., Using social media sites, such as LinkedIn and Facebook, to their greatest advantage). The first session had more than 20 staff members from various facilities in attendance.

The Certification Capstone Project, still under development, will involve a three-tiered capstone program to mirror the CRCST, CIS and CHL certification, and require an applied-skills project to be presented at the end of a three-month program. As Balch explained, this will give “Triple Crown” certificants the ability to continue to build their industry knowledge, and do so in a way that benefits all SPD staff and the OR.

“It will require them to put theory into practice, learn to measure data, work collaboratively with the OR, and present that data to the team.”

Balch is proud of his department’s culture of professionalism and commitment to knowledge advancement, and he envisions a world where “Triple Crown” certification is the norm in facilities across the country. As great as such an accomplishment would be, he’s quick to point out to his staff that attaining certification status is only half the mission.

“Our daily focus is to integrate all that IAHCSSM has to offer into the preeminent goal of excellently caring for our patients,” he said. “The best is yet to come.”