



4 Equipment Considerations for Physician Practices

Blog | December 15, 2016 | [Healthcare Reform](#), [Operations](#), [Outsourcing](#)

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With the implementation of the Affordable Care Act, healthcare facilities are incentivized to invest in preventative and outpatient care and keep readmissions rates low. As a result, facilities are launching, renovating and expanding primary-care offices, outpatient surgery facilities, and rehabilitation centers. With thousands of manufacturers and millions of products to choose from, outfitting these facilities with new equipment can be overwhelming.

Here are four considerations:

Product Choice and Purchasing

Practices should be careful in selecting equipment for a new or newly-renovated office, as a product that's optimal for a large-scale trauma center may not be the most cost-effective or practical choice for a local primary care clinic.

For example, stainless steel IV poles are standard in hospitals because they protect patients from infections. However, less expensive chrome IV poles are often sufficient for the typical physician's office that does not perform major surgery. The chrome IV pole serves the same purpose and is still a high-quality product, but is more appropriate for a physician's office. Similarly, silver-based antimicrobial powder coatings for handrails and other frequently touched areas are more crucial in an emergency room than a pediatrician's office.

With so many options available, it is important to choose the right equipment for your needs. Just one exam room may need equipment from 20 different manufacturers and purchase orders can cost up to \$125 each in administrative costs. Using a healthcare equipment-focused distributor can help navigate these decisions and consolidate purchase orders.

Receiving and Unloading

Physician offices likely don't have a receiving department with a loading dock, pallet jacks, forklifts and the appropriate personnel to help unload everything once it's delivered. Even finding space to park a large truck can be an issue. Special arrangements may need to be made to ensure any necessary equipment is on site, and that employees capable of accepting, tracking, and unloading without damaging the items are available at the time of the delivery.

Another problem facilities often face is a lack of storage space for new equipment. This can be a challenge during the construction of new facilities or when replacing equipment in existing offices.

To complicate matters, offices that order equipment from different sources may have to deal with multiple delivery dates, which is why it can be beneficial to use a knowledgeable distributor that also offers logistics streamline the delivery process.

Assembly, Installation and Cleanup

Unlike hospitals, physician practices often don't have facilities staff to help assemble and move equipment into the appropriate room once it's delivered. Pre-assembling and pre-staging the equipment offsite can make the installation process much smoother because it minimizes the amount of work needed upon delivery.

Special power tools, wall mounts and other installation equipment may be required, and dumpsters or trashcans large enough to accommodate cleanup efforts may need to be rented or purchased. If an office is replacing old equipment, the items need to be disposed of or donated to an appropriate organization. Heavy-lifting guidelines from the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration need to be considered as well. You also may need to schedule biomedical and other safety inspections for the new equipment before it can be used.

Logistics

The logistics of opening or expanding a physician's practice can be complicated, and delays costly. For existing offices, equipment deliveries need to cause as little disruption to patients as possible. Newly constructed facilities have even more moving parts to manage, and timelines need to be carefully tracked and readjusted based on the status of the construction project. According to Merritt Hawkins, A 20-doctor clinic can lose \$125,000 in revenue for each day it is late in opening. Whether you choose to handle the logistics in-house or hire a healthcare equipment distribution and logistics company, having a detailed plan will save time and money and ensure that patients receive the best care possible.

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