



## Report Confirms: Reprocessing Single-Use Devices Decreases Costs

**Health-Economist von Eiff submits a cost-benefit-calculation to the European Commission and proves a savings potential of millions of Euros.**

The reprocessing of single-use medical devices is considered a great savings of costs within the circle of clinics however reliable data was missing so far. Now, the Centrum für Krankenhausmanagement (Centre for Hospital Management) at the University of Münster under the leadership of Health-Economist Prof. Dr. Dr. Wilfried von Eiff submitted a sample calculation to the European Commission. The paper shows clearly that the reprocessing of single-use devices decreases the costs per procedure and increases the efficiency of hospitals.

The reason for the cost-benefit-calculation was the report on the issue of the reprocessing of medical devices in the European Union by the EU-Commission from September 2010, which stated that the economic advantages of reprocessing are not adequately documented. Therefore, the European Commission demanded a proof of the efficiency by a study, namely regarding business and macroeconomic aspects.

Germany's leading experts in this field, the Expert Group for Safety in Medical Devices Reprocessing (smdr), now took actions. The Health-Economist Prof. Dr. Dr. von Eiff performed a holistic calculation for the reprocessing of single-use devices with a sample calculation and pointed out a great savings potential for the healthcare systems. The paper was presented to the European Commission in February 2011 and shall substantiate the necessity of such a study.

Within the sample calculation the use of reprocessed ablation catheters is compared to new ones. Those devices are used for catheter ablation with 46,000 patients in Germany and 165,000 patients in Europe. Between three and four catheters are used per procedure. While a new non-cooled RF-ablation catheter costs the hospital on the average 1,190 euro, the price per procedure for a reprocessed catheter amounts only to approximately 450 euro. Prof. Dr. Dr. Wilfried von Eiff projected the balance from Germany to Europe. Therefore, the savings in Germany alone account for 16,451 m euro and in Europe for about 59,02 m euro. As Prof. Dr. Dr. Wilfried von Eiff could point out further, the costs for a use of cooled ablation catheters are reduced significantly as well. With savings of 705 euro per reprocessed catheter the savings potential in Germany equals about 6,92 m euro and the europeanwide savings about 24,43 m euro. The sample calculations shows, how much savings could be achieved with one single product group alone and is representative for the general savings potential due to reprocessing.

„Medical service providers are forced as well to add with the reduction of avoidable costs, so healthcare systems in the EU stay financeable“, says Prof. von Eiff. “This example makes it clear, that the reprocessing of single-use devices can make a crucial contribution hereto. However, this may only be applied to products, for which a validated reprocessing procedure exists or one can be developed respectively. This is the case with the examined medical devices.”

Opponents of reprocessing meanwhile present continually the argument of a patient safety hazard. Thus the medical device manufacturer lobby “Eucomed” even insists on a general ban of reprocessing in Europe – and fuels sentiments against reprocessing with headlines such as “A risky business” in the Journal of Medical Device Regulation (issue 2/2011).

„Evidently, the reprocessing is a thorn in the side of the manufacturers because they see their turnovers threatened. However, we have such high safety regulations in Germany, which by the way

are valid equally for single-use and for multiple-use medical devices, that after a preceding product and risk analysis to determine the ability of reprocessing, a definition of a product specific procedure and a proper reprocessing no increased risk for the patient exists”, says smdr-spokesman and Germanys leading Hygiene Expert Prof. Dr. Axel Kramer, “What indeed was missing so far was the economic proof-of-concept. With the presented cost-benefit-assessment of the reprocessing of single-use devices a first important step was taken to render this proof.”

Prof. Wilfried von Eiff supplements: „Studies among hospitals, which reprocess selected medical devices with a validated procedure for ten years and longer, revealed, that no aggravated risk for patients is observed. We hope, that the presented figures for a cost reduction through the reprocessing of ablation catheters are the prelude to finally perform a cost-benefit-assessment of further medical devices reprocessing in the form of an extensive study.”

For the political decision-makers further cognitions should be interesting next to the calculated savings effect. Thus ethical effects are pointed out by the paper as well. After all, the quality and the availability of medical performances depend essentially on their affordability. Moreover, von Eiff points to the fact, that from the achieved cost reductions, investments can be made in turn which serves both the economy and the maintenance of the quality of supply.

About the Expert Group for Safety in Medical Devices Reprocessing (smdr)

Under the patronage of the German Association for Clinic Hygiene (Deutschen Gesellschaft für Krankenhaushygiene (DGKH) and the German Association for Central Sterile Services (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Sterilgutversorgung (DGSV)) the smdr started its work in the middle of 2006. The group wants to codify with its work the framework for the reprocessing of medical devices both under professional and legal aspects. The aim is to increase the safety of reprocessing of medical devices in practices, central sterile services and at industrial reprocessing service providers. The members of the smdr include doctors from the departments of Hygiene, Cardiology, Surgery and Dentistry; Health Economists, Material- and Medical Device Specialist as well as specialist solicitors for medical law.

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