OR Recycling Checklist
Starting and Maintaining an OR Recycling Program
Katherine Gentry, MD, Elizabeth Hansen, MD, and Shazia Mohammad, MD

No matter where you work, you can launch a perioperative recycling program with these tips.

- **Create a team of partners and a champion from each division**
  - Anesthesia team, nurses, scrub techs, PACU, environmental services, surgeons

- **Make a business case**
  - Recycling can be an opportunity for a public relations campaign. For some places, it can even be **profitable** to recycle.

- **Contact facilities waste management and environmental services**
  - Understand recycling vendor contracts & concerns for infection control. Where is the waste going?

- **Identify hauling and recycling partner**
  - How does the waste stream look like leaving the hospital? Are they hand-sorted or machine sorted? Find a recycling vendor [here](#).

- **Identify what can be recycled**
  - Paper, cardboard boxes, batteries, irrigation bottles, basins, Tyvek, basins, pitchers, trays, flexible clear packaging, single use devices, medications, etc.

- **Categorize the types of waste**
  - Trash, paper, compostable, biohazard, hazardous, radioactive waste, etc.
  - Segregating waste can reduce disposing all trash in expensive regulated medical waste.

- **Reduce waste before it’s generated**
  - Only open items for immediate use.
  - Use reusable surgical gowns and laryngoscopes.
  - Reformulate surgical and anesthesia kits.
  - Keep the same patient monitors throughout the entire stay.

- **Gather buy-in**
  - You need buy in from leadership, OR staff, anesthesiology, nursing, and environmental team members. Consider partnering with them.

- **Logistics**
  - Determine where the recycling bins will be placed and who will collect the recycling trash. Make sure it is sustainable.

- **Conduct PDSA cycles and gather input**
  - Conduct Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycles and obtain feedback in a small area before spreading system-wide.

- **Maintenance of the program**
  - Regularly educate new personnel. Post updated and consistent signs for sorting and recycling throughout the perioperative area.

- **Maintain enthusiasm for recycling**
  - Do a waste audit. Track data and show how much waste was diverted or how much disposal costs were reduced. Reward those who did the best job.

- **Anticipate roadblocks**
  - Contamination and infection control, increased time and effort for sorting, increased room turnover time, and no existing recycling processes for certain plastics.

- **Resources for recycling**
  - [Environmental Impacts of Recycling](#)
  - [Greening the Operating Room](#)
  - [Implementing Successful Waste Management](#)
  - [Recycling Initiatives in the OR](#)
  - [Medical Plastic Recycling](#)
  - [6 Steps to Start a Hospital Recycling Program](#)

- **Societies/groups for sustainability**
  - [Healthcare without Harm](#)
  - [Practice Greenhealth](#)
  - [CleanMed](#)
  - [ASA Subcommittee on Environmental Health](#)
  - [SPA Special Interest Group for Sustainability](#)