A Lean methodology known as 5S was used to organize areas in the University Hospital Sterile Processing Department (SPD). 5S is used to make work more efficient and effective through the organization of work areas. The five 5’s are:  
- **Sort** - only the necessary items needed to do the work are in the area  
- **Set in Order** - place the needed items in the appropriate location  
- **Shine** - make sure the area is clean  
- **Standardize** - make a process of the first three 5’s across the board  
- **Sustain** - maintain the gains that have been produced  

In this project, the 5S techniques were used in various areas of the department to reengineer workstations and to create additional space through the removal of unnecessary equipment and supplies.

### Overview

The project began by having employees participate in Lean 5S training to establish a basic understanding of the methodologies and how it pertained to achieving the departmental goals. The frontline staff were then invited to engage in using the 5S principles to redesign their work area. Prior to actual redesigns, staff went through inventory storage and used red tags to flag items that they thought could be removed from the department. The red tags were removed if the items were used but removed items from the department when not used by a tag’s specified date. Once removed the redesigns of areas began. Areas formally addressed in the project included:  
- **Sherrad and Tray Assembly Stations**  
- **Container Storage Areas**  
- **Washer Storage Closet**  
- **General Supply Room and Offices**

### Tray Assembly Station

The tray assembly stations are the core work areas in SPD. Once instruments have been washed, the instruments are inspected, counted, and placed back into the instrument tray that holds them. The trays are then placed into protective containers along with filters and sterilization indicators prior to going through the sterilization process. The workstations were ergonomically redesigned to improve workflow.

### Lessons Learned

- **5S training and communication of goals allowed for a common understanding of the methods and purpose**
- **Frontline staff involvement are key**  
  - They know the workflow processes better than anyone and have many ideas for improvement  
  - Began to recognize inefficiencies in their work  
  - They enjoyed participating and having input into the outcomes of the project.  
- **Project instilled a sense of ownership over their work and began to claim the work areas as their own**  
- **Started applying the 5S principles on their own to other areas within the department (Instrument Inventory Storage Areas)**  
- **Relatively quick and inexpensive to implement**  
  - Three areas below – $400 labor and equipment

### Storage or Assembly Station?

The area below was being used for storage of tray containers, 40 of which were rarely being used. The containers were red tagged as seen in the image in the Overview and eventually surplus. Upon removal an additional tray assembly station could be used.

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**Starrad Station**

The Starrad station is used to place single instruments into peel packs that must be sterilized chemically rather than with heat. Each sterilization is also documented in this area. The area lacked workspace and was redesigned based on process flow.