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2211 North Oak Park Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60707-3392  
telephone: (773) 622-5400  
TDD: (773) 385-5419  
fax: (773) 385-5453  
website: www.shrinerschicago.org

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Dockets Management Branch (HFA-305)  
Division of Management Systems and Policy  
Office of Human Resources and Management Services  
Food and Drug Administration  
5603 Fishers Lane, Room 1061  
Rockville, MD 20852

Re: Docket No.99N-4491, FDA's Enforcement Priorities for Single-Use Devices  
Reprocessed by Third Parties and Hospitals and Reprocessing and Reuse of Single-Use  
Devices: Review Prioritization Scheme

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen:

Devices Reprocess by Third Parties and Hospitals and Reprocessing and Reuse of Single-Use  
Devices: Review Prioritization Scheme. As a professional in the sterile processing field, I  
belong to a community of professionals who have been instrumental in the development of safe  
and effective techniques for reprocessing medical devices. This issue is of great importance to  
our profession is critical to the delivery of healthcare.

I am very encouraged by the FDA's decision to take action on this issue to ensure and enhance  
patient safety. The FDA's risk-based categorization scheme is a sound approach to regulatory  
oversight. Factors such as risk of infection and device performance are critical in determining  
whether or not reprocessing is appropriate, safe, and effective. I would like to take this  
opportunity to respond to specific issues raised in the draft documents, as follows:

I applaud FDA for recommending that opened but unused medical devices be exempt from the  
regulatory guidance. There is no scientific evidence that would establish a public health risk  
with the reprocessing of these devices. Since they have not, by definition, been previously used  
on a patient, the reprocessing of these devices do not raise the same level of concern as the  
reprocessing of devices that have been used on a patient. In addition to exempting opened but  
unused devices, the FDA should require Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEM's) to provide  
special sterilization instructions as part of the labeling requirement to ensure that the proper  
method of sterilization is used on those devices whose sterility may be breached and would  
require re-sterilization.

Exempting non-acute facilities such as ambulatory care centers, clinics and physicians' offices  
from regulatory guidance is counter-productive to the FDA's efforts to ensure and enhance  
patient safety associated with the reuse of SUDs. These health care facilities oftentimes lack  
the necessary resources and protocols to ensure safe and effective reprocessing of single-use  
items. I strongly encourage the FDA to phase-in enforcement of the guidelines for all healthcare  
facilities that reprocess not just hospitals.

*Providing pediatric orthopaedic surgery; plastic, reconstructive and maxillofacial surgery; and spinal cord injury rehabilitation since 1926.*

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Director, Patient Care Services  
Catherine Smrcina, PhD, RN, C, ONC

99N-4491

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I urge the FDA to seek uniformity from OEMs in the process and manner in which devices are labeled. There are no standards in place, which guide multi-use labeling. An OEM should not be permitted to label a device for single-use if it is aware of safe and effective reprocessing and sterilization procedures. The device label should include the number of times the device will perform without failure as validated by the OEM.

The release of FDA's final guidance documents should be delayed until the FDA addresses this labeling issue.

Furthermore, if hospitals and third party reprocessors are expected to utilize the flow chart as outlined in the Review Prioritization Scheme, the materials, coatings, and components of a device must be known. And finally, In all cases, OEMs should be required to provide instructions for acceptable, validated methods of sterilization and/or reesterilization for all devices,

A listing of most commonly reprocessed devices has been included with the guidance documents. The FDA asserts that those SUDs not on the list are automatically categorized as high risk. Does this mean that a plastic, sterile connector labeled single-use is high risk?? In my opinion, FDA should remove this statement from its guidance. The FDA should provide a rationale for each device categorized as high risk. All the answers to the questions posed in the flowcharts, as well as all supporting documentation used establishing a risk categorization for a particular type of device, should be published and publicly available. In addition, FDA should work with a panel of multidisciplinary professionals to determine the final list of SUDs and their risk category. In this way, if there is additional evidence about the safety of reprocessing a particular device, there would be an established and timely process set out for adding this evidence to the record and potentially changing the risk categorization of a SUD. The final guidance document should not be released until this multi-disciplinary panel can be identified to determine the final list of SUDs and their risk category.

The moderate category serves only to complicate an already complicated scheme. I would recommend the FDA consider only two device categories – low and high – risk devices. The FDA needs to be decisive about the safety and risks associated with the reprocessing of every SUD.

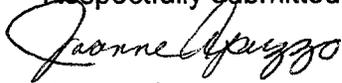
As far as devices categorized as low risk, by definition, the reprocessing of low risk devices does not present a risk to public health. As such, hospitals who engage in the reprocessing of low risk SUDs should be exempt from all pre-market notification and approval requirements. To ensure that reprocessing of low risk devices is safe and effective, decontamination, assembly and sterilization standards or recommended practices should be disseminated to hospitals. The American Society for Healthcare Central Service Professionals (ASHCSP) has developed recommended practices on all facets of reprocessing which could serve as a "community best practices" model.

With respect to high-risk devices, facilities who will be unable to comply with the proposed guidelines and should seek a commercial reprocessor for reprocessing of SUDs. Those facilities capable of complying should be allowed to continue to engage in this activity.

As outlined in the Safe Medical Devices Act, hospitals are currently subject to reporting requirements as a device user. Requiring hospitals to comply with manufacturers' reporting requirements would be redundant and an inefficient use of already limited resources. Hospitals would benefit from further education and communication the ACT not a duplicative process for reporting adverse events.

Should the FDA proceed with enforcing all pre-market and notification requirements on hospitals, it is highly probable hospitals will elect to discontinue internal reprocessing activity. The investment of resources necessary to comply with pre-market and 5110(k) application requirements would diminish any cost savings hospitals would realize by reprocessing single-use devices. I believe this would be an unfortunate outcome that would only serve to increase the cost of healthcare in hospitals without significantly adding to the already safe and effective reprocessing activity in which hospitals are currently engaged.

Respectfully submitted,



Joanne Apuzzo  
Central Supply Coordinator



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**CHICAGO**

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Chicago, Illinois 60707-3392

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