

- **Stock valuation.** Add up the monetary value of the stock so you know how much of your eye unit's cash is invested in stock. If you are trying to minimise costs, you can calculate the cost of consumables per patient, which is helpful to know.
- **Review of non-moving and slow-moving items.** These are any items that have not been issued for two months, or stock levels above what is needed for two months. You must determine whether these items are not required and decide what to do. Do this in consultation with the ophthalmologists and management team, perhaps when standardising your supplies. Not doing so means that items will take up valuable space and tie up funds required for other items.

Although it is vital to avoid running out of stock, we have seen that having more stock is not always the answer, since it requires more space, more investment, and more time to manage. There is also a greater chance of wastage.

It can be difficult to strike the right balance, but good record keeping, careful planning, and honest evaluation of your successes and failures will help you to work out the right stock management plan for your eye unit's needs.

Equipment spares

For each piece of equipment in use in your eye unit, determine which components you must replace periodically, and how often.

Take into account the time and cost involved in importing spare parts, and plan to stock adequate quantities of each item to avoid delays, should you have to replace a part.

It makes sense to purchase essential spare parts while purchasing the equipment, as the manufacturers' support, and certainly their interest, will diminish with time. It is also worth negotiating with them to provide a certain quantity of spares free of charge.

Manufacturers may try to make the spares specific to the equipment by some minor alterations or by simply renaming a generic equivalent – and charging up to four times more for it! This is particularly true of bulbs for operating microscopes and slit lamps: their generic equivalents can often be found in the automobile industry. A good knowledge of where to source generic equivalents can help you to reduce costs and establish a local source of supply.



EXCHANGE

A simple paper-based system for stock management

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The best systems create little extra work for staff and can be implemented almost without thinking in the course of a busy day. The system used in the stock room of our eye clinic in Ivory Coast illustrates this well.

All medicines, instruments, and consumables are held in the stock room. Each item has a specific code, which is displayed near that item on the shelf and is also kept on our accountant's computer.

Stock levels are monitored both by our accountant and by the person in charge of the stock room.

The accountant, who is in charge of ordering stock throughout the year, keeps a record on the computer of the stock levels of each item. Ordering is based on current stock levels and on our centre's statistics (e.g., there has to be enough consumables for our average of 20 cataract operations a week).

To keep accurate records on the computer, the accountant relies on the up-to-date records kept by the person in charge of the stock room. This is done by means of a simple system of individual stock cards.

A pink card is placed on the shelf next to each item. An open, compartmentalised shelving system – in which no more than

two types of medication are held in the same compartment – ensures that products and stock cards are easy to find.

The stock cards are divided into two columns. The left-hand column states what was brought in or taken out, as well as the date. The right-hand column shows the number of items now in stock (the current stock level).

For example, when the person in charge of the stock room takes out two bottles of eye drops, she adds a new line to the card. In the left-hand column, she writes the date and that she has taken out two bottles of eye drops. She then updates the number in the right-hand column: the previous total minus two. Similarly, if twenty new bottles are brought in, she adds another new

line and updates the number in the right-hand column: previous total plus twenty.

The person in charge uses this system in all circumstances: when a patient buys medication, or when the centre's head nurse comes to collect consumables for the week's work.

The accountant can quickly check each item's stock level by glancing at the relevant card in the stock room. Once a week, stock cards are collected and the data entered into the computer.

This system of placing a single stock card right next to an item in the stock room can also be used when there is no member of staff specifically in charge of distributing stock, provided that everyone who is permitted to take items out of the stock room updates the relevant stock card.

'Ordering is based on current stock levels and on our centre's statistics'

