



## CASE STUDY

### Dental students stay clean with barcode tracking

*Tufts University relies on Metalcraft nameplates to serve 600 patients daily*

#### **Opportunity: track instrument inventory at dental school**

Tufts University School of Dental Medicine in Boston combines education, research, patient care and community service to produce well-rounded dental professionals. They combine these disciplines at the Tufts Dental Clinics, offering a full range of high quality general, specialty, and emergency dental care at lower fees than private practices. At the Clinics, dental care is especially affordable because faculty-supervised pre-doctoral dental students or post-doctoral dental residents provide treatment.

Accordingly, the patient load is demanding – about 600 people every day are served at the School in downtown Boston.

As the program grew, the School was losing dental equipment in the course of distributing, cleaning and storing more than 1,000 instrument-filled cassettes every day. They also wanted to reinforce their compliance with procedures preventing dental infection.

“We put together a committee to research an instrument tracking program,” said clinic business manager Steve Witkus. “We needed a better view to prevent loss and to reinforce safety standards.”

#### **Solution: rugged barcode identification**

The committee selected barcode technology to gather data and track equipment – scanning each cassette as it travels from the sanitation process to the dispensaries to the students and back to sanitation after each appointment. The data from each scan logs custody and compliance.

Cassette sanitation was a principle challenge for the tracking program. The metal cassettes are subjected to an autoclave several times each day; the sterilization machine’s high pressure saturated steam at temperatures over 250°F is used on glass and metal equipment that can withstand the heat and water.

“Barcodes that couldn’t stand up to these conditions would be a nightmare,” said Witkus.

Fortunately, the committee found Metalcraft, an Iowa-based manufacture of durable identification products. Their Teflon®-coated metal barcode nameplates were well-suited to

survive the cleaning process over time, as the nameplates' coating withstands temperatures up to 500°F while the photographically-reproduced copy and barcodes are protected by an anodizing process to ensure accurate and reliable scans despite abrasion and other hazards.

“We order two of every barcode number – one as a back-up – for data continuity,” said Witkus. “The first use of a barcode number requires a set-up process, and then we’re set for a long time. Still, Metalcraft has been good with continually offering new products, including replaceable numbers.”

**Result: dependable identification and safe, secure equipment**

Tuft’s instrument tracking program has worked reliably for more than a decade, allowing the school to meet the demand for a high volume of safe, clean dental equipment.

Moreover, the Metalcraft barcode nameplates have consistently performed despite the rigor of the dental school’s operation.

“Some of the original Metalcraft nameplates are still working 13 years later,” said Witkus. “Metalcraft has been a good match for us.”

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