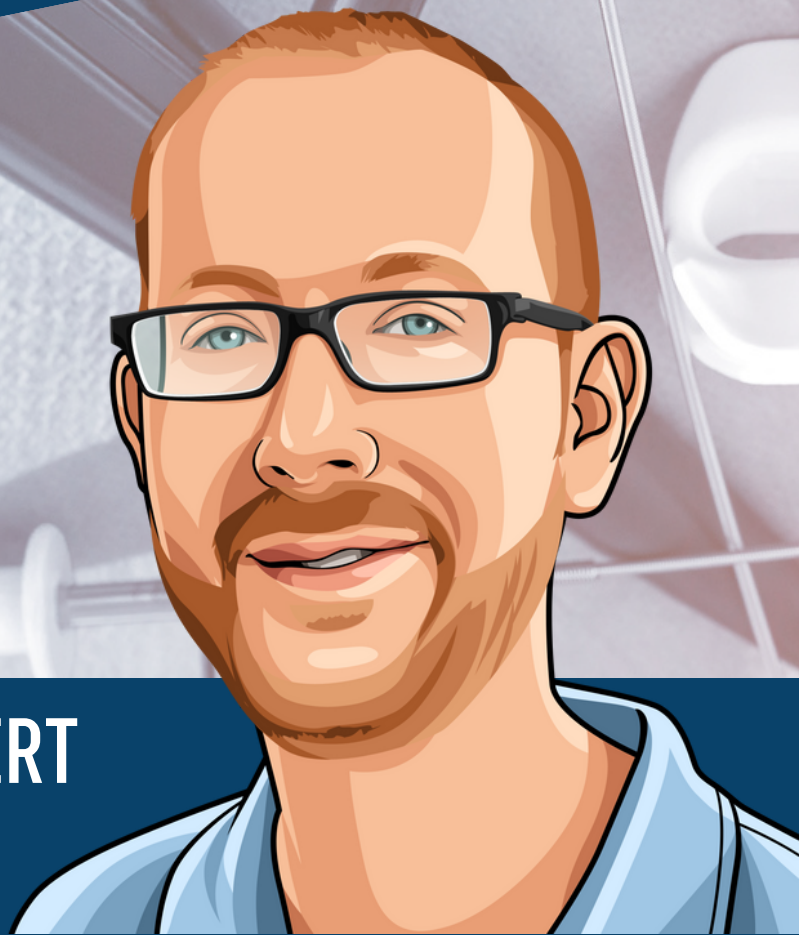# LEAK TESTING:
THE COSTLIEST PROCESS FAILURE

FLEXIBLE ENDOSCOPE EXPERT

BEYOND CLEAN

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Beyond Clean Flexible Endoscope Expert™:

Leak Testing: The Costliest Process Failure

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The single most scrutinized aspect of flexible endoscope reprocessing is leak testing. It is a specific area of focus for regulatory and accrediting agencies because failure to perform leak testing correctly presents a massive risk to patient safety through cross-contamination. Failure to detect leaks in flexible scopes can also result in fluid invasion, which is the most expensive type of damage a flexible endoscope can sustain.

The kicker? Both the patient risk and the expensive damage are both entirely preventable through proper leak testing.

There are many ways leak testing can be done incorrectly, but the most common mistakes to look for are:

·Failing to check the leak tester to ensure it is pushing air. You can't find leaks without air pressure.

·Attaching or detaching the leak test connector to the scope while underwater. This opens the internal pathways of the scope to the sink water and floods it, which causes extensive damage.

·Not submerging the scope completely. Although leaks are most common at the distal tip, they can occur anywhere on the scope.

·Not articulating the distal area during the leak test. Wrinkles in the bending section can pinch off leaks making them disappear until the scope is articulated the other direction.

·Inadequate time spent leak testing. Not all leaks are created equal. Some leaks are slow leaks that only appear once the internal pressure is built up enough to press through a hole in the body of the scope. ANSI/AAMI ST91 standard recommends that scopes are observed under water for at least 60 seconds. A timer in decontamination can be very helpful for assuring compliance.

Deficiencies and inconsistent leak testing practices are some of the costliest process failures and should be a key area of focus for improvement efforts. Be sure to check out this blog and leak testing video for more information about what proper leak testing looks like.

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Michael Matthews, MBA, CLSSGB, CRCST, CIS, CHL currently serves as the Director of Customer Training and Education for Agiliti. He previously served as Director of Clinical Education and Training for Northfield Medical in addition to former roles of Territory Manager for the Little Rock, Arkansas area, and a Clinical Education Manager for the southeast region. Before working at Northfield, Michael served as the manager for sterile processing at Baptist-Health Medical Center-Conway in Arkansas. During this time, Michael also served as an Infection Preventionist on a PRN basis to consult on reprocessing services throughout the Baptist-Health system. Michael has previously served as a Sterile Processing Technician at Jewish Hospital & St. Mary's Healthcare (Catholic Health Initiatives) (2012-2013), Baptist East Hospital (2011-2012), both in Louisville, KY, and system manager for sterilization and high-level disinfection at Conway Regional Medical Center (2013-2016). He holds three Healthcare Sterile Processing Association (HSPA) certifications for sterile processing. Michael has also served as a subject matter expert and participated in exam development for HSPA. Michael holds an MBA and has also been certified as a Lean Six Sigma Greenbelt. He has published articles in Infection Control Today, Becker's Hospital Review, Healthcare Purchasing News, as well as several LinkedIn articles in the sterile processing community. Michael is a former cohost of the Beyond Clean podcast, the premier podcast for sterile processing professionals throughout the world.

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