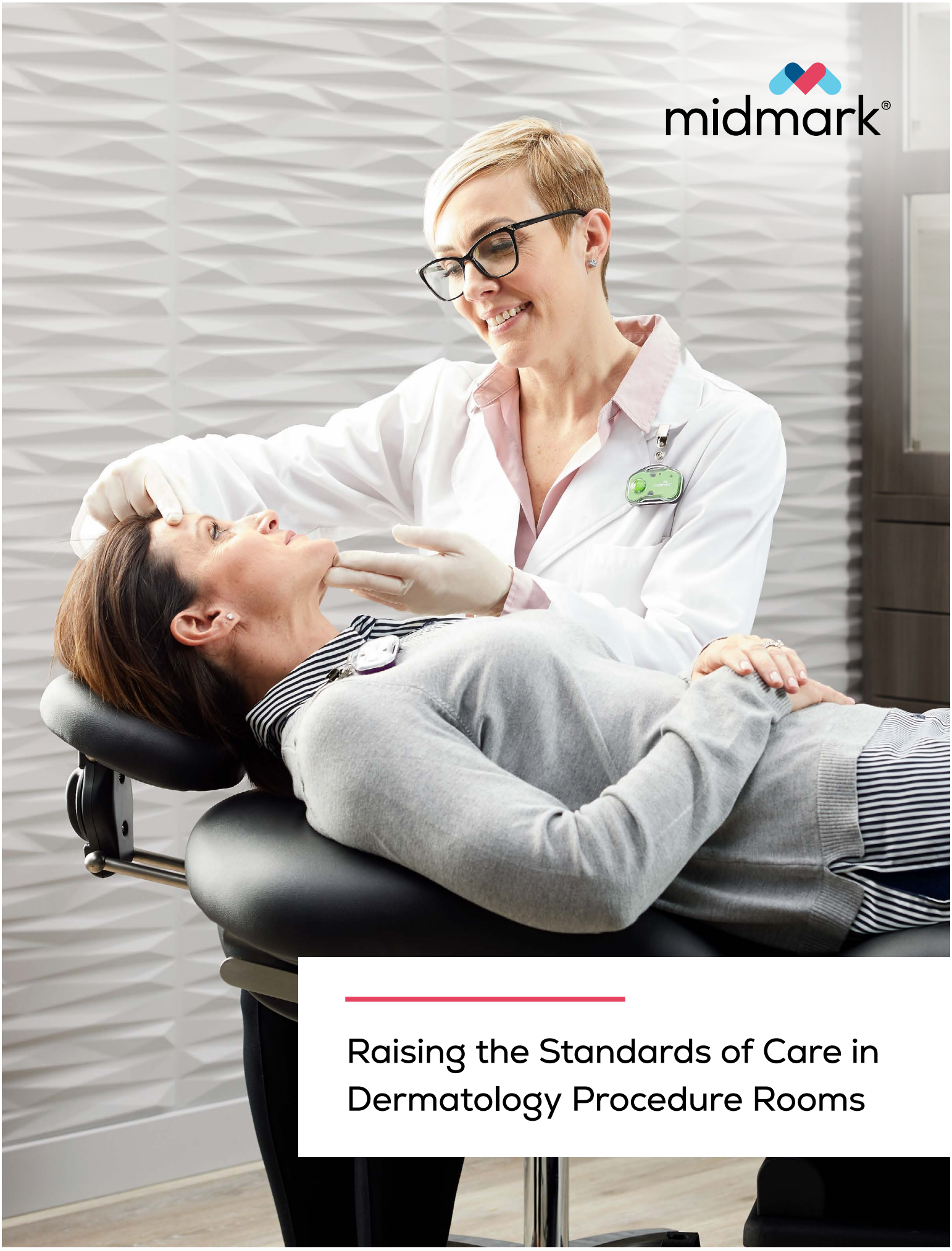

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Raising the Standards of Care in Dermatology Procedure Rooms

Care delivery in the dermatology space is undergoing significant change, demonstrated by the transformation occurring at the point of care (POC). What was once a largely clinic-bound, physician-driven experience is evolving into a faster, more accessible, and technology-enabled model centered around patient needs and expectations. The shift reflects how dermatology procedure rooms have evolved into highly specialized environments where care is delivered and maintained at high standards.

This Midmark white paper looks at how strategically selected procedure chairs, cabinetry and a well-managed instrument processing (IP) practice are foundational elements that can elevate standards of care in the dermatology space.

Foundational Factors for Elevating Standards

While innovations in technologies and treatment often take center stage, two foundational factors play a critical role in elevating standards of care in the dermatology POC: greater accessibility and well-managed instrument processing. Together, these elements help create and maintain safer, more equitable and more efficient dermatologic care.

The need for greater accessibility in ambulatory care, including dermatology environments, is driven by several factors that reflect both the evolving healthcare landscape and the diverse needs of patient populations and healthcare workers. While raising the standard of care provided, it can also provide an opportunity for a facility or clinic to differentiate itself with patients and healthcare workers.

Accessibility is also addressed in one of the pillars of the Quintuple Aim, which is a framework in healthcare that aims to improve the quality and efficiency of care, while addressing health disparities. The five pillars of the Quintuple Aim are:

1. Improved patient experience
2. Better outcomes
3. Lower costs
4. Clinician well-being
5. Health equity

Healthcare-associated infections (HAIs) and surgical site infections (SSIs) have long been recognized as a major patient safety challenge, especially in acute care environments. However, as more procedures transition to outpatient environments, such as ambulatory surgery centers (ASCs) and physician offices, the urgency to prevent infections in these environments is intensifying. While infection rates are generally lower in the dermatology space compared to acute environments and ambulatory surgical centers, the risk still exists, especially as the volume of procedures increases.

While hospital-based sterile processing departments operate with extensive infrastructure, dermatology practices often deal with unique operational and resource allocation challenges as they try to manage consistent and validated IP in smaller, office-based settings. At a time when the industry is experiencing staffing issues, declining reimbursements, financial pressures and growing competition from private equity-backed, corporate-owned practices, one unfortunate IP misstep can have a significant negative impact.

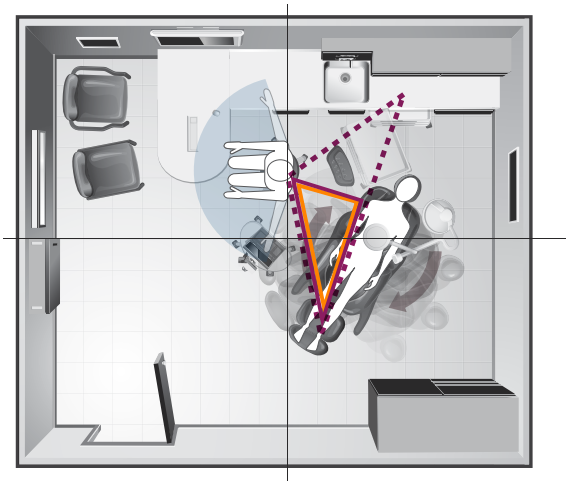
Unlocking Greater Accessibility

Greater accessibility in the dermatology POC is crucial for ensuring all patients, regardless of their physical, cognitive or sensory abilities, can access and receive appropriate care. It helps break down barriers and fosters an inclusive environment where every individual, including patients and care teams, can engage in enhancing health and well-being.

The following are important benefits dermatology practices can realize with a committed focus on greater accessibility at the point of care.

- **Becoming and remaining compliant** with accessibility-related standards and regulations can help prevent legal action, fines, reputational damage and loss of funding or accreditation.
- **Enhancing safety and ergonomics** helps create a more comfortable and efficient environment for healthcare workers.
- **Increasing workflow efficiency** allows for the most effective use of the healthcare staffs' time.
- **Improving patient experience** helps increase the level of comfort for patients, reducing anxiety levels and improving patient satisfaction.

The following are two components of the procedure rooms that can help increase accessibility.



Procedure Chair

The focus of any dermatology procedure room is the procedure chair as it is the place where caregivers truly deliver care to patients—it touches nearly every patient. This is why it is important that an accessible chair be a central fixture of any dermatology environment for patients and healthcare workers.

The US Access Board recently released new standards providing design criteria for exam and procedure chairs. The key standards state examination and procedure chairs should have a low-seat-height of 17 inches or lower, with a high-seat-height of 25 inches or higher, while also providing four additional transfer positions located between the low and high transfer positions. The seated transfer surface should be at minimum 21 inches wide and 17 inches deep with compliant transfer supports that support entry, exit and repositioning from either side of the chair. Additionally, the base should be 26 inches or less in width to be compatible with patient lift devices.

Designing for accessibility is no longer just a recommendation, it is a federal requirement. Beginning July 8, 2024, and October 8, 2024, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Department of Justice (DOJ), respectively, began enforcing the 2017 US Access Board Standards (MDE). The 2017 standards require exam and procedure chairs to have a low transfer height of 17 to 19 inches, along with other requirements. These regulations require that each facility have at least one compliant exam or procedure chair and weight scale, with deadlines of July 8, 2026, for HHS-regulated entities and August 9, 2026, for DOJ-regulated entities.

Procedure chairs that meet these requirements, such as the Midmark® 631 Procedure Chair that reaches a low-seat-height of 17 inches, increase the patient's comfort, protect their dignity and help physicians conduct a more thorough and accurate procedure.

Cabinetry

The right cabinetry can help provide greater accessibility for patients and the care team. When designing for the clinical space, the size of room and equipment as well as the types of mobility devices used by patients and staff must be taken into consideration. In cabinetry design, accessibility includes front-approach sinks with appropriately sized countertop depth and width, compliant under-sink knee and toe clearances, and reach-appropriate access to cabinet pulls, storage bins, soap dispensers and towels.

For care teams, cabinetry designed specifically for the staff who use it can greatly increase accessibility and help maintain an ergonomically friendly environment.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 76% of healthcare workers are female, while the average height of females in the US is just under 5 feet 4 inches. The typical cabinetry found in clinical environments is not designed for them. Today with traditional 84-inch-tall cabinetry, staff often need to use stools or other devices to access supplies on upper shelves.

Cabinetry designed for average-height healthcare workers enables caregivers to easily reach frequently accessed supplies without unnecessary bending, stretching or constant overreaching, which can cause aches and pains. Synthesis® Wall-Hung Cabinetry incorporates ergonomic principles and is designed for the caregivers who interact with cabinetry in the medical space, creating a better caregiver experience at the point of care.

Strengthening Instrument Processing

IP is a critical part of infection prevention and patient safety in dermatology practices. From routine biopsies to cosmetic procedures, dermatology offices rely on reusable medical instruments that must be properly cleaned, disinfected and sterilized to prevent infection transmission.

Deficient instrument reprocessing can result in SSIs, transmission of bloodborne pathogens, outbreaks linked to contaminated equipment, regulatory penalties and liability exposure. It can even cause long-lasting damage to a practices' reputation and a loss of patient and staff trust. Patients want assurances that necessary precautions are taken to ensure a safer healthcare experience—clinicians and staff want the peace of mind a safe working environment can provide.

The following are two components of the IP space that can strengthen the process.

Sterilizer

Often considered the focal point of any infection prevention program and IP area, sterilizers, like the ones offered by Midmark, are part of a front-line defense in keeping patients safe from contaminants. It is important to have the size, type and number of sterilizers that fit the needs of the practice or facility. Not all sterilizers are created equal, so understanding sterilizer functionality and features is important. They should be easy to use to help ensure safety protocols are consistent and equipment is properly maintained and durable to reduce the frequency of required maintenance by users.

Sterilizers should be FDA-cleared and certified to the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) Boiler and Pressure Vessel Code by a third-party, licensed inspector. They should also have a means for tracking sterilizer usage and physical performance for audit-ready recordkeeping. This ensures the necessary data is automatically loaded, backed up and organized for safe transfer and easy access, streamlining and simplifying an audit.

Cabinetry

Along with offering greater accessibility, modular cabinetry created specifically for the medical environment, such as Synthesis® Cabinetry, can help ensure the workflow design of the IP area is organized efficiently. This makes it easier to control and manage the process and maintain safety standards. The right configuration allows staff to follow the dirty-to-clean workflow as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to help contain contamination and maximize the efficiency of the instrument cleaning and sterilizing process.

Regardless of the size and shape of the IP area, these five critical steps based on the guidelines can help standardize IP workflow. This can make it easier to manage the process and maintain the standards needed for providing a safe healthcare experience.

1. Receiving + Cleaning + Decontamination
Reusable instruments, supplies and equipment should be placed in appropriate containers at the point of use to prevent percutaneous exposure incidents (PEIs) during transportation to the IP area. All items should be received, cleaned and disinfected in one section of the processing environment. It's important to ensure that all instruments, supplies and equipment are thoroughly cleaned of organic debris prior to sterilization or sterilization will be ineffective.

**To ensure best practices, make sure to remove gross soil at the point of use in the exam room. This should be done prior to practicing the five steps within the dedicated sterilization space.*

2. Preparation + Packaging
This area should be at least four feet from the previous section or have a barrier to prevent contaminants from entering the space as items are inspected, assembled into sets or trays, and wrapped or packaged for sterilization.

3. Sterilization
This area should include sterilizer(s) and related supplies with adequate space for loading, unloading and cooling down of instruments and other supplies. Thought should be given to the size and type of sterilizer(s) that will need to fit into the configuration of the IP space.

4. Monitoring/Sterility Assurance
This area needs to be configured to support the documentation and recording of mechanical, chemical and/or biological monitoring utilized to help ensure the efficacy of the sterilization process. Monitored results and records should be accessible and stored long enough to comply with federal, state and local regulations.

5. Storage
The storage area should be covered and contain space for both sterile and disposable items. Supplies and instruments should not be stored under sinks or in other locations where they might become wet or damaged, or the packaging could be compromised.

Dermatology procedure rooms have evolved from simple treatment spaces into highly specialized environments where precision, safety and patient experience intersect. As expectations for clinical outcomes and regulatory compliance rise, components like procedure chairs, cabinetry and sterilizers play a critical role in ensuring standard levels of care are achieved and maintained.

For more information on the dermatology point of care ecosystem, visit our dermatology workflow.

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