

Bringing Teams Together

Leiden University Medical Center (LUMC) in Leiden, the Netherlands, received one of the world's first SurgiCube®s. It was initially acquired to provide extra surgical capacity for Ophthalmology procedures. Tilly Zwaal, Operation Assistant at LUMC's Day Care Department, explains how the system has improved efficiency, enhanced patient experience, and brought the medical team closer together.

Use of the SurgiCube® in the Day Care Department is shared between disciplines. The Ophthalmology Team utilize it for two days a week, and the Dermatology Team for one day per week. Located only 10 meters away from the main Day Care facilities, the SurgiCube® is just a short walk for patients and staff. Tilly is one of a team of five nurses, who work with the SurgiCube® alongside other duties. The team, which is rotated according to needs, is managed by Wim van Galen, Nursing Manager.

"I have worked with the SurgiCube® since its introduction, more than 10 years ago," said Tilly. "No special training was required to use the system. I worked in the operating room for one month as part of my nursing training, and then we were coached for a few weeks in the SurgiCube® to ensure that we were confident in using it."

Embracing New Technology

When the SurgiCube® was introduced at LUMC in 2006, it was still a prototype product. As such a new concept in healthcare, it took a while to introduce it and fully integrate it into the Department, but as the benefits became clear, it was accepted. Tilly has found that the SurgiCube® has a great deal to offer patients and staff.

"It took us a little while to get used to working with the new system," she admitted. "At first, I was surprised how small the SurgiCube® is, but this ultimately connected the team strongly. It is 'cosy'. In a conventional operating room, the team changes constantly, but with our SurgiCube®, you get to work all day with the same people in a small environment. I like that."

"Patients are more comfortable and relaxed when they have a procedure in the SurgiCube®," she remarked. "There are no big machines inside the SurgiCube®. The patients can wear their own clothes and they sit in a comfortable chair, rather than having to lie on a bed, as they would in a conventional operating room. The SurgiCube® is a less harsh environment to be in than a conventional operating room. It is less intimidating for patients and they can communicate easily with the doctor. They can ask the specialist questions before the surgery."

In addition, with the SurgiCube® just meters away from the department, there is a much reduced distance for patients and staff to travel to their operation.

"Before we installed the SurgiCube®, patients used to have to take an elevator to get to the operating room, which was on a different floor," Tilly explained. "Now, there is a 10 meter journey on the same floor! It has streamlined the patient's route. There is no need for extra staff to bring the patients to the operating area. Our production has increased. For our doctors, this means extra time is available."

Practical Use

LUMC's Ophthalmology Team most frequently uses the SurgiCube® for cataract and eyelid procedures, along with other procedures that require local anesthetic. Vitrectomies are not yet performed in the system, but this is a possibility for the future. The SurgiCube® achieves outstanding sterility through uni-directional air flow. LUMC's SurgiCube®, which is an older model, is ready for use after 30 minutes after simply switching it from night-mode to day-mode. Newer models have an on/off switch, but it is recommended to leave these models on 24/7, so that they are continually ready for use and ensure optimal, constant, air filtering.

"It can be a challenge to work under the SurgiCube®'s air flow," Tilly remarked. "Several things must be kept under the flow at all times. We have marked the edge of the flow to make this easier. While the SurgiCube® saves time and has increased our efficiency overall, it can take a little extra time to prepare the SurgiCube® for the next patient, as we must work under the air flow."

Over a Decade of SurgiCube®

The LUMC's years of experience with the SurgiCube® have been a success story.

"The SurgiCube® has brought many positive changes to our Department," said Tilly. "My colleagues all share my enthusiasm for the system. We get to work together in a small team with a lot of responsibility, which is nice to do. It's like running our 'own shop'!"

Quote

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Tilly Zwaal was trained in Nursing at Alphen aan de Rijn, in the Netherlands, in 1979. She worked at the Leiden University Medical Center (LUMC) from 1980 to 1992, returned in 2002 to work in the Ophthalmology Department, and was appointed Operation Assistant in 2006.