Objectives:
The Linen Committee was charged to establish and enforce linen management policies to improve efficiencies and reduce waste, and to incorporate sustainability principles, while maintaining patient-focused quality of care and safety.

Methods:
Baseline data was collected to understand linen categories (e.g., bed linens, towels, gowns, scrubs, etc.), and their replacement and laundering costs. Unit site visits were performed, and staff were surveyed to assess their understanding of linen management practices. Departmental policies on bedmaking and linen management were reviewed.

Results:
Cost and weight analyses for bed linen composition showed that two major items for potential reduction were incontinent pads and thermal blankets. Combined, these two items comprised almost 60% of total bed linen weight and 25% of the linen replacement budget.

Staff from 15 nursing units participated in a linen survey. Survey results indicated knowledge gaps in staff practices and that they would benefit from further educational outreach.

Action:
The Linen Committee recommended the following changes to improve linen efficiencies, which were included in the staff education campaign:

1. Eliminate daily linen change requirements;
2. Reduce use of incontinent pads and thermal blankets;
3. Refrain from bringing extra linen into patient rooms;
4. Promote linen reject bag usage to reduce linen waste.

Early Outcomes:
With implementation starting in July 2012, early results have demonstrated the benefits of the staff education campaign:

- Reduces hospital environmental footprint
- Reduces hospital environmental footprint
- Reduced water and energy consumption
- Promotes proper hamper use
- Clear and well-labeled hamper use facilitates linen sorting of soiled and rejected linen, ensuring that no linen be discarded as red bag waste

Staff Education Campaign:
Educational posters and inservices were provided for each nursing unit that participated in the linen survey. Individual unit results were shared with staff and posted in staff areas. New policy revisions and products were clearly outlined along with evidence to support each initiative. The campaign emphasized the financial, environmental, and safety reasons for the changes.

Lessons learned:
- Multi-disciplinary participation is key for an effective committee.
- Updates with nursing management council and senior leadership helped to refine recommendations and gain support.
- Vendor and product changes during process hindered data collection and assessment (i.e., changing laundry vendors).
- Staff surveys helped guide needs in training for the education campaign.
- Time and resource commitments are required for successful policy roll-out.

Questions? Ideas? email: Sustainability@ucdmc.ucdavis.edu

Reduce use of incontinent pads:
Incontinent pad practices were changed to focus on using them only after clinical assessment of patient need. Along with the recent introduction of disposable incontinent pads, overall costs of purchasing and laundering incontinent pads has decreased.

Reduce use of thermal blankets:
New bed making procedures reduce the use of thermal blankets which had been replaced upon each bed linen change. The blanket gets changed only if soiled or upon room cleaning, after patient discharge. This has reduced laundering costs for thermal blankets.

Eliminate unnecessary extra linen storage in patient rooms:
Staff education focused on highlighting the benefits from saving nursing time and the hospital’s reduced environmental footprint. Patient education included tent cards provided at bedside, and verbal notification at unit admission.

Eliminate daily bed linen change:
The revised daily linen change policy eliminated mandatory daily bed changes, and focused on bed linen changes as needed, or upon patient request.

Promote proper hamper use:
Clearly defined and labelled hampers facilitate efficient linen sorting of soiled and rejected linen, ensuring that no linen be discarded as red bag waste.

Additional Areas of Opportunity:
Future sustainability goals include:
- Washable surgical linens and warm-up jackets
- Reusable pillows
- Scrub dispensers to reduce loss of scrubs
- Reusable linen diversion from landfill