





# CIS Self-Study Lesson Plan

Lesson No. CIS 257 (Instrument Continuing Education - ICE)

Sponsored by:



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# Career Growth for Instrument Technicians

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Identify educational opportunities for the Central Service technician role
2. Identify educational opportunities for advancement to an educator role
3. Identify educational opportunities for advancement into a Central Service leadership role
4. Identify educational opportunities for advancement into a Central Service management role

Instrument Continuing Education (ICE) lessons provide members with ongoing education in the complex and ever-changing area of surgical instrument care and handling. These lessons are designed for CIS technicians, but can be of value to any CRCST technician who works with surgical instrumentation.

### Earn Continuing Education Credits:

**Online:** Visit [www.iahcsmm.org](http://www.iahcsmm.org) for online grading at a nominal fee.

**By mail:** For written grading of individual lessons, send completed quiz and \$15 to: PEC Business Office, Purdue University, Stewart Center Room 110, 128 Memorial Mall, West Lafayette, IN 47907-2034.

**Scoring:** Each quiz graded online at [www.iahcsmm.org](http://www.iahcsmm.org) or through Purdue University, with a passing score of 70% or higher, is worth two points (2 contact hours) toward your CIS re-certification (6 points) or CRCST re-certification (12 points).

**More information:** IAHCSSM provides online grading service for any of the Lesson Plan varieties. Purdue University provides grading services solely for CRCST and CIS lessons. Direct any questions about online grading to IAHCSSM at 312.440.0078. Questions about written grading are answered by Purdue University at 800.830.0269.

**C**ONTINUING EDUCATION IS INVALUABLE FOR CAREER GROWTH, regardless of one's path or aspirations. By closing the gap between technician and director roles through learning and developing new skills within the technician, educator, leadership and management areas, a Central Service (CS) technician may find new perspectives that may help clarify his or her most suitable career path. While exploring these roles, a technician may also increase value to the patient, as well as satisfaction within the organization.

## OBJECTIVE 1: IDENTIFY EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE CENTRAL SERVICE TECHNICIAN ROLE

CS professionals – from basic entry-level technician to the certified technician with many years of experience – require a range of technical skills. Combining education with hands-on experience helps transform a new CS technician into an expert. This knowledge covers several areas of responsibility: instrument identification, instrument function, cleaning and decontamination, sterilization, safe handling, and storage. More advanced areas of knowledge may even include Lean concepts, instrument repair and maintenance, inventory management, and knowledge of service specialties.

Technicians who wish to advance professionally or become more proficient in their current role must improve existing skills and learn more complex skills for growth and development. There are many different ways to broaden CS technical skills, and these opportunities are available both inside and outside the department. Spending time in the

Operating Room (OR) when possible to better understand their processes and how CS affects the outcome of those processes is just one example. Figure 1 shows a technician correctly retrieving an instrument tray from inventory; this helps ensure the OR receives an undamaged tray. Time spent in the OR or other departments served by CS can also be used to facilitate communication between the two departments.

Other opportunities for professional improvement and advancement include attaining continuing education from department inservices; participating in local, state and national seminars; reading articles and lesson plans both online and in print; spending time with other CS technicians who have attained a higher level of skill in an area of interest (such as specialized instrumentation); and networking and seeking knowledge from other CS professionals on various aspects of the discipline. All of these approaches provide opportunities to expand knowledge with both visual and hands-on learning. In addition, CS technicians may also become involved with regulatory and standards-making



Figure 1: Proper retrieval of an instrument tray from inventory helps ensure the OR receives an undamaged tray.

agencies and associations, such as the Association for the Advancement of Medical Instrumentation (AAMI). This involvement allows technicians to not only share their knowledge and input, but also learn from others in related fields.

A critically important professional advancement factor is for CS technicians to learn the theory behind processes performed in order to understand the how and the why of a process.

It is important to understand that education and skills development should

always be ongoing. Continuing education not only maintains existing skills, but also develops skills that can help lead to professional advancement.

### **OBJECTIVE 2: IDENTIFY EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVANCEMENT TO AN EDUCATOR ROLE**

Educator roles and responsibilities include not only technician knowledge, but also the ability to relay and teach that information to others in both verbal and

written form. A successful educator will look at the complete picture of the CS department and be able to bring all of those processes into an understandable format that can be taught to all levels of experience (and with all types of learners). It is essential that the educator be comfortable speaking to small- and mid-sized groups within their department or organization. Educators should continually seek new or changing standards and technology. Educators help ensure that knowledge is not only shared,



Figure 2: Technician volunteers can effectively lead an informal inservice.

but that colleagues attain an effective level of working knowledge.

Similar to what is available to a technician, an educator will find substantial resources within local, state and national associations to assist them within their role. Becoming involved with these associations and regulatory bodies provides an opportunity to hone presentation and teaching skills, and also provides access to current and relevant information that will make the department's training program more successful. Successful educators take an active role in ensuring departmental training is implemented and recorded. This documentation of skills and training is required and will be evaluated by surveying agencies to ensure that the CS department's staff is up to date and compliant.

In addition to applying the educational opportunities outlined for technicians, educators may gain knowledge and tap

additional educational offerings from vendors, organizations, local technical schools and colleges. Developing skills such as public speaking and program development is an important quest for many professionals seeking growth and advancement. It is also important that CS professionals learn as much as possible about a product, service or process to be able to develop training or inservice programs on CS-related topics. Topics may include onboarding and orientation of new staff members, developing and teaching annual competencies, and new product and standards inservicing, to name just a few. A technician who aspires to become an educator may volunteer to help develop and teach departmental inservices to gain experience in both public speaking and teaching. Figure 2 shows a technician volunteer leading an informal inservice.

The educator has a responsibility to provide the department with necessary

training and competency assessment; however, it is also the responsibility of individuals within the department to identify personal goals and educational needs. Providing feedback to the educator will help him or her prepare more meaningful education to all areas and technical levels in the department. Without this feedback, education may not address all the needs of the team.

### **OBJECTIVE 3: IDENTIFY EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVANCEMENT INTO A CENTRAL SERVICE LEADERSHIP ROLE**

Leadership is more than a title or role. A leader is a person who can guide, inspire and serve for the betterment of the entire department and organization. While one might want the manager and leader to be the same, management is often a separate skill from leadership. An effective leader is one who embodies and exhibits the core attitudes and attributes of a department and the organization. A leader is able to officially or unofficially lead the department's members toward departmental goals. The role of department leader may be either a formal or informal role. It is important for a leader to understand the job duties and functions of the CS department, as well as facility policies, the department's goals and needs, and the standards that guide the department toward best practice.

Leadership is a lifelong pursuit. It is more than study – it is about learning. Often, it is less about performing a specific action than having a specific mindset. It is keeping an eye on the goal and an eye on one's colleagues to understand each individual's needs and help the department reach its goals. Leaders will spend time in the department listening and learning from staff, so they can understand what is needed and desired. Successful



leaders typically exhibit higher levels of emotional awareness. Many organizations offer classes specific to leadership and its various facets. For some, it is a natural ability; however, it is a skill that can also be developed through education, focus and practice. Taking a more active role in projects and groups throughout the organization is an effective way to gain practice and experience. Perhaps more importantly, those wishing to grow and thrive in leadership roles should try to embody the attributes of leadership every day across all aspects of work and personal life.

**OBJECTIVE 4: IDENTIFY EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADVANCEMENT INTO A CENTRAL SERVICE MANAGEMENT ROLE**

Management has many facets that run parallel to leadership traits; however, management is about coordinating the goals and objectives of the department. This can be accomplished by utilizing the available resources in the most efficient and productive way. An effective manager must possess the hard skills required to manage budgeting, scheduling, staffing and purchasing, and at the same time, be able to serve as the department's advocate and ambassador. Not only must managers interact with their direct reports and committee members, they must also report to their own supervisor, and work with Human Resources (HR) and other department leaders.

Being part of committees and learning different skills is a great starting point for CS professionals to expand and grow toward a management position. Finding and participating in hospital committees, such as those for purchasing, quality, safety, and infection prevention, can provide valuable insight and perspective to help propel one in a management or leadership role.

Seeking out organizational, college or online offerings of management courses is another excellent avenue for up-and-coming managers and leaders. Some employers may even offer continuing education tuition reimbursement to encourage professional growth and development. CS professionals may communicate with HR and their department manager to identify courses or other professional development opportunities that would be most suited to their personal career goals. Volunteering to take a more active role in maintaining visual management or metrics boards, leading daily huddles or representing the department at various functions is another effective way to grow in the profession. Making an effort to step out of a purely operational role into a more strategic role to gain experience and exposure in other areas will be beneficial – not only for professional growth, but also for determining if pursuing a management role is the right choice.

**IN CONCLUSION**

CS technicians who possess a clear understanding of the career paths that are available to them will have an advantage when it comes to their professional growth and development. It is vital for CS technicians to continue learning and expanding their professional horizons to discover new ways to contribute to their department and advance within the profession. Committing to continuing education and exploring career growth opportunities can help CS technicians find their most suitable career path. Doing so can also promote professional and personal satisfaction that is a win-win scenario for the CS technician, the organization and its patients. **G**

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**WANT TO BE AN AUTHOR?**

IAHCSMM is seeking volunteers to write or contribute information for our CIS Self-Study Lessons. Doing so is a great way to contribute to your own professional development, to your Association, and to your Central Service department peers.

IAHCSMM will provide guidelines and help you with the lesson to ensure it will be an enjoyable process. For more information, please contact Natalie Lind (natalie@iahcsmm.org).