

Broadsheet

Provincial Linen Service Updates

Black Mesh Bag: A great way to improve linen quality

Now that the provincial linen service has been implemented, a number of improvements are being made to the standard inventory of linen items across the province. Focusing on the latest textiles, items are chosen for durability, safety and the comfort they provide to patients. Some examples include larger, softer towels for long-term care residents, colour-coded wash cloths, standard bedding, and standard patient gowns and robes. Using standard high-quality items will ensure a consistently good patient experience throughout the province. A provincial linen advisory group, made up of leaders from each health region and the cancer agency will be guiding decisions about the standard linen inventory items.

But it will take a while for all health care facilities to notice the new provincial standard in the linen inventory. This is because prior to becoming one provincial linen service, the regional laundries purchased linen for the region or regions they provided service to. Since there were six original laundries, inventory items could vary greatly from region to region. Sometimes product variation reflected internal processes that are carried out to manage linen in facilities, such as the way items are stored, transported and used on units. Currently, the provincial inventory is a combination of the new standard linen items introduced by K-Bro Linen Systems (K-Bro) as part of the new service and items from the regional laundries that we absorbed into the new provincial inventory.

There are several ways that older inventory items are removed from the inventory, including regular audits at the new plant and the distribution centres. But older items will still show up in clean linen when it is delivered to facilities and units.



For this reason, the new linen service has created a common way to identify defective linen items and remove them from the inventory before they reach the patient. K-Bro uses a Black Mesh Bag program with its customers. Care providers place defective linen in black mesh bags, which are stored on carts or in clean linen storage areas. Once an item is placed in a black mesh bag, it is either repaired or removed from the inventory. The health system also receives a credit for the defective linen item. All facilities are expected to use the black mesh bags.

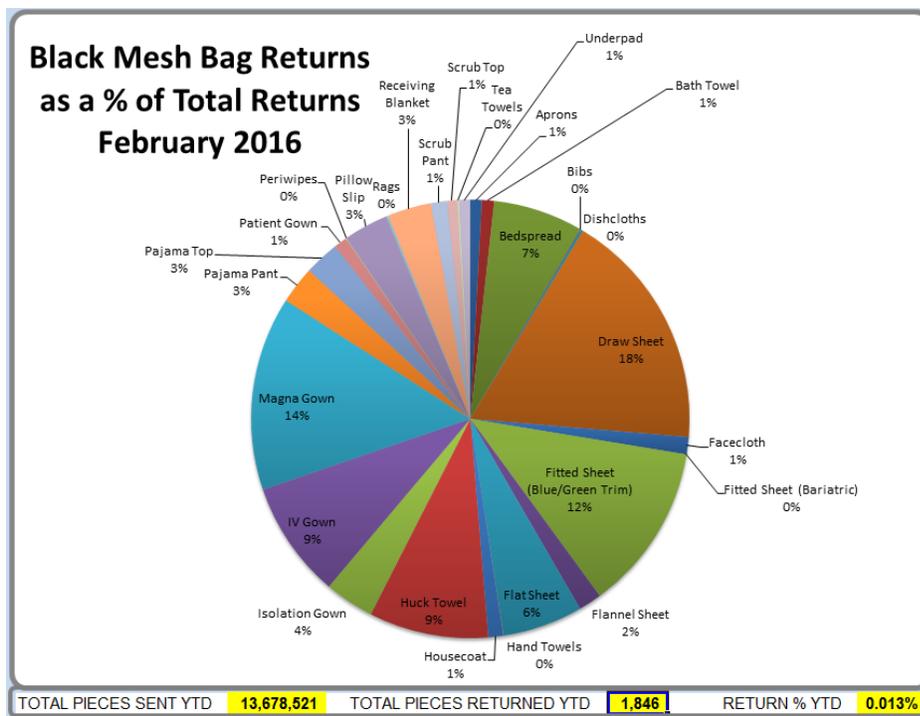
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The black mesh bags were first introduced in Saskatoon when it opened its distribution depot in April, 2014. To ensure the bags are being used consistently in facilities, representatives from K-Bro, the region, and 3sHealth are meeting regularly with front-line staff and managers to talk about the importance of the program and how using the black mesh bags can affect the quality of patient care. Standard work has also been created.

Laundry managers no longer have to rely on anecdotal information but have real data and evidence to influence planning and ensure problems are corrected.

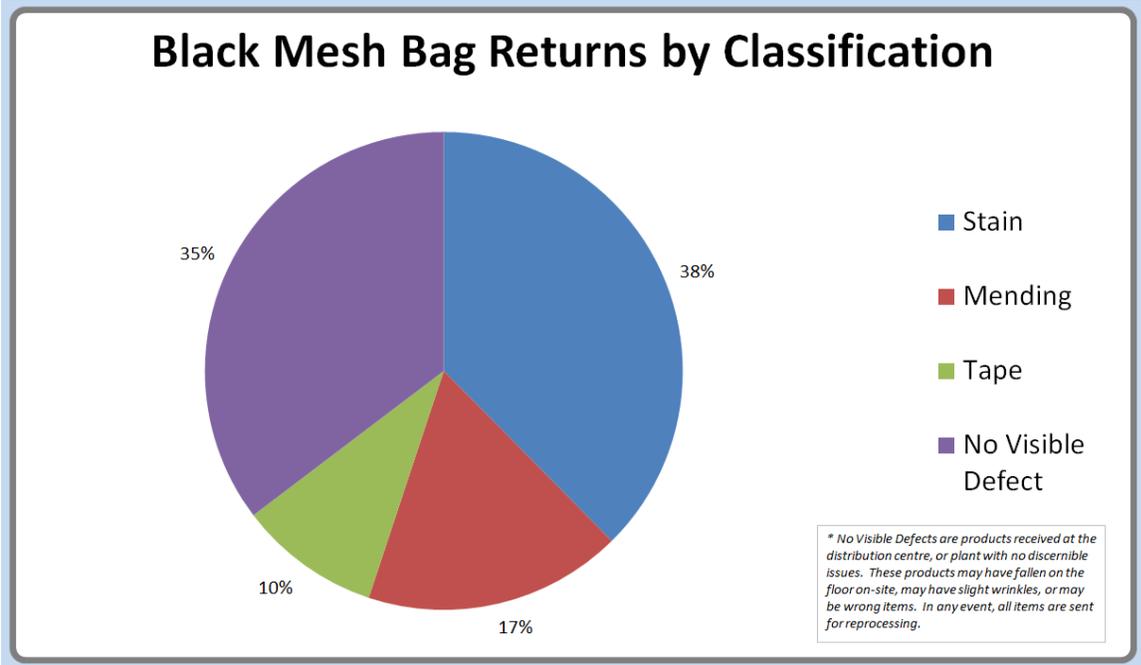


Reports provided by K-Bro (on left) show the percentage of types of items returned in the Black Mesh Bag as well as the total percentage of the whole provincial inventory returned. Currently it appears the Black Mesh Bag is underutilized since only .013% of the total inventory has been identified as defective in February. Placing defective items in soiled linen receptacles does not help remove them from the inventory. To accomplish that, defective items must be placed in the Black Mesh Bag.

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As education and awareness increase, front line workers can play a large role in improving the overall quality of the inventory by removing defective linen and placing it in the Black Mesh Bag. The chart on the next page shows a snapshot of the items that are returned.

“The quality of items in the provincial linen inventory, which contains older and newer items, constantly changes as items are reprocessed,” says Crawford. “To ensure we are continually providing a high-quality product to patients, residents, clinicians, and front-line workers, we need to track performance in a measurable way. The black mesh bag program provides us with the information we need to do this.”