

MedTech's Role in Advancing Environmental Sustainability

A Conversation at the AdvaMed 2022 MedTech Conference

As the medical technology (MedTech) industry and organizations continue to innovate in an increasingly conscientious and global world, U.S. states—as well as countries around the world—are adopting environmental policies and regulations to combat the growing climate crisis. MedTech companies are navigating these changes, embracing a circular economy by setting environmental sustainability goals, and maintaining competitiveness.

The Advanced Medical Technology Association (AdvaMed) convened sustainability leaders at its annual MedTech Conference last fall for a panel discussion that featured panelists across the entire MedTech value chain. The panel was moderated by Jamie Pero Parker, PhD, the Sustainability Team Lead at [RTI Innovation Advisors](#) who helps clients solve their sustainability challenges. Dr. Pero Parker was joined by MedTech industry experts from the device and health care communities to discuss their perspectives on sustainability.

Several key themes emerged during the panel:

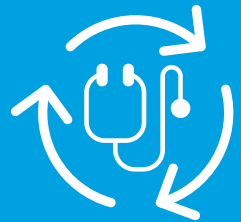


THE BUSINESS CASE FOR SUSTAINABILITY IS CLEAR IN MEDTECH

Many companies are setting sustainability goals; making those goals meaningful, actionable, and attainable can be a challenge. Building consensus internally is the first step to attaining targeted goals. Experts reflected on the importance of aligning sustainability goals with business objectives: As one expert said, “We put together a business case for how we can address these goals while being competitive.”

A MOVE TOWARD A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE DOESN'T MEAN COMPROMISING THE PATIENT

Some may question how a company can be sustainable while also ensuring that the health and safety of patients remain the top priority. Experts noted that these two priorities don't exist in silos. Environmental health and human health are intricately connected. Rather than prioritizing one or the other—the patient or minimizing environmental impact—companies are thinking about them in conjunction. The two are inextricably linked.



DESIGNING PACKAGING WITH IMPROVED ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE WILL BE A KEY FOCUS GOING FORWARD



Evolving waste reduction/environmental impact policies are prompting the industry to rethink packaging options. For medical device packaging, strong performance and safety protocols regulate packaging requirements. However, there are opportunities both upstream and downstream to improve the recyclability of packaging. Upstream, there are opportunities for redesigning and lightweighting secondary and tertiary packaging. Downstream, there are opportunities for health care facilities to recycle packaging, particularly paper, cardboard, and fiberboard.

COLLABORATION IS KEY

Responding to regulations after they are implemented creates silos between the supplier industry and partners (e.g., hospitals, labs, recyclers). Both suppliers and their customers need to ascertain how the regulations apply to them to ensure compliance. Because regulatory changes may impact packaging components, medical devices, and equipment, the MedTech industry is increasing collaboration. Intentional and proactive collaboration upstream of any regulation will ensure a sustainable future that benefits the entire value chain—suppliers, customers, and end users—downstream. Sustainability challenges, such as those facing the MedTech industry, are inherently systemic problems that cannot be solved without increased and sustained collaboration across the value chain.



SUSTAINABILITY IS THE FUTURE, AND NOW IS THE TIME TO ACT



The voices of customers, employees, and shareholders are echoing the same demands on the importance of sustainability. Couple these demands with impending policy and regulatory changes, and the MedTech industry must continue to promote a circular future. Building on progress from the last few years, the MedTech industry will continue to advance the rapidly evolving regulatory landscape and expedite efforts on sustainability to stay ahead of the curve.

The MedTech industry is continuing to learn lessons from the growing experiences of sustainability as environmental regulations pick up speed. MedTech innovators are aggressively addressing net-zero strategies and product packaging innovations. The nature of sustainability is requiring collaboration and work together across the healthcare value chain in unprecedented ways, and the MedTech industry has been bonding together to treat its new patient, the planet.