



Supply chains: healthcare

An unusual market sector

James Warren

There's something being made here. But beyond the fact these are metallic objects, you might be hard pressed to identify their purpose.

Peter Mitchell, Manufacturing Director, B Braun

We're a production facility. We are producing over 2,000 products here on this site in Sheffield, and we take these products from the initial forging, we have to hold a stock at the forging, we then go through machining and general finishing, the fitting, finishing. Close to me is the vacuum heat treatment facility where we are metallurgically heat treating products.

James Warren

The degree of precision and the constant quality checking at every stage of manufacture tells you that this isn't just any piece of bent metal.

And you might be reassured by the care when you realise that the ultimate destination of these is inside someone's hip, quite possibly yours.

B Braun makes surgical implants and medical instruments. Their UK manufacturing plant is in Sheffield, the traditional home of the British steel industry. Their UK head office is rather more contemporary, on the outskirts of the city.

Receptionist

Good morning, B Braun Medical, how may I help?

Paul Steel, Sales & Marketing Director, B Braun

B Braun Medical, it's a broad based surgical and medical company operating in various areas of the National Health Service, really focused around direct provision of products into the operating theatre, the wards, and subsequently into the community.

The company is split into three different trading divisions. The Hospital Care Division is focused around products and services for use in anaesthesia, and also in the wards of the hospital. The Aesculap Division is focused around products and services during operating theatre procedures. So, everything, whilst a patient's actually undergoing surgery.

The Outpatient Market Division is focused upon products and services into the community. So, the organisation is able to provide everything for patient care in hospital, upon admission, during surgery, and subsequently back into the community.

James Warren

There are several sections in this video, exploring different aspects of supply chain management in this slightly unusual sector, unusual because it isn't always thought of in terms of a product system. Also, while it is budget driven in the large part, the National Health Service is neither market-oriented nor profit-making. But, in the supply process, who is the end customer, NHS or the patients?

Paul Steel

Ultimately, we would consider the patient to be the absolute end user. However, on the way to that end user, we are engaged with many people in the purchasing circle. The surgeon has a great deal of say concerning the Aesculap products. The pharmacist has a big input concerning hospital care products and, ultimately, the hospital purchasing and supply and finance team have an umbrella overview concerning the purchasing cycle.