

News story: Automated cleaning of surgical instruments: apply for funding

Surgical instruments and tools including scalpels, forceps and tweezers.

The [NHS in Scotland](#) – supported by the [Can Do Innovation Challenge Fund](#) – has up to £150,000 to invest in studies that look at new ways of automating the pre-cleaning of surgical instruments.

Importance of pre-cleaning

Surgical instruments must be properly cleaned, inspected and sterilised within the sterile services process before each use.

Most existing procedures rely on manual cleaning. This is because current, automated pre-cleaning systems have a limited focus on one specific area, such as neurological surgery. They are also not designed for a range of instruments.

Improvements to automated systems could tackle clinical, health, safety and environmental concerns, improve efficiency and reduce costs.

Solutions must reduce cost and waste

The competition aims to find a solution for automated pre-cleaning that reduces costs and waste, is easy to operate and connects with existing NHS equipment. It must include:

- pre-soaking and internal flushing
- automated chemical dosing
- coarse-contamination removal, ideally ultrasonics or a spray function
- fully programmable pre-cleaning steps
- measurement and monitoring
- integration with automated washers or washer-disinfectors

Funding of £150,000 is for a series of feasibility studies. A further £300,000 could be available in a second phase to develop the most promising ideas.

The competition is being run under SBRI (the Small Business Research Initiative).

Competition information

- the competition opens on 5 March 2018, and the deadline for registration is at midday on 9 May 2018

- it is open to any organisation that can demonstrate a route to market for its idea
- we expect phase 1 contracts to be worth up to £30,000 and to last up to 6 months
- successful projects will attract 100% funded development contracts
- a briefing event will be held on 18 April 2018