



Moving forward or standing still?

The case for mobile printing in healthcare environments

With paper records, identity tags and labelling information used extensively in hospitals and clinics worldwide, the origination and format of printed materials is more important to a high quality service than it might seem.

Handwritten records are always liable to misreading through no fault of the reader. Central printing resources, while being cost-effective to administrate and maintain, are inconvenient for staff moving from patient to patient, and run the risk of nurses picking up the wrong documents from the printer tray. With energy, ink and paper costs high, they can also be uneconomical to run.

Mobile printing, then, can play a critical role in the provision of efficient, safe, productive healthcare services to patients, making it easier to produce and validate patient-related materials, and reducing the potential for errors in patient identity.



Mobile printing to support more accurate labelling

The more time and distance between when labels and other printed matter are produced and when they are applied, the greater the chances they will be put on the wrong sample or applied to the wrong patient. For example, prior to converting from centralised printing to bedside specimen labelling, staff at a US hospital identified 63 steps in its phlebotomy collection process where errors could occur. Labelling specimens at the patient bedside eliminated 44 of these steps from the process. After implementing a bedside labelling system, the hospital reported zero misidentified patients and specimens, zero incorrect specimen containers and zero unnecessary phlebotomies after six months and 8,000 phlebotomies.¹

The hospital also analysed specimen identification errors and found that carrying multiple labels into a patient room was the leading cause of specimen mislabelling. Labelling away from the bedside was the second-leading cause. The reasons for creating processes to prevent specimen labelling errors are clear. So is the value of bedside labelling for specimen identification.

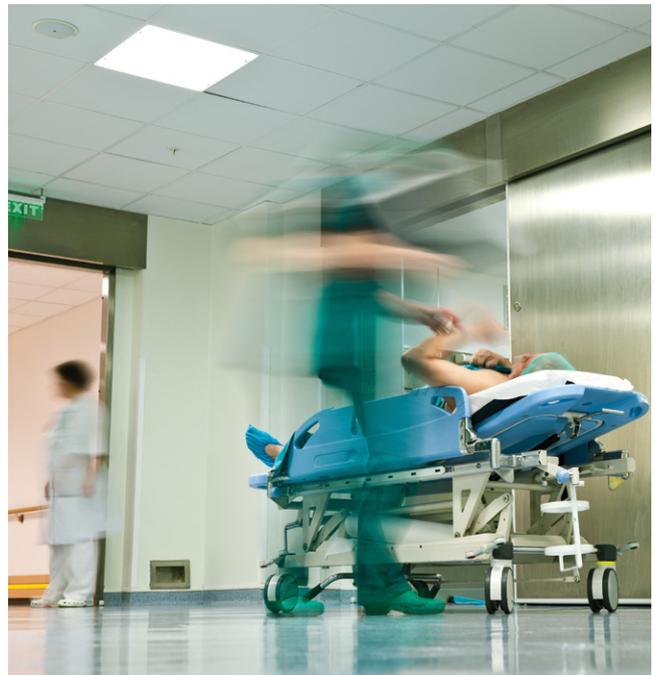
Numerous other studies and anecdotal results have shown the practice to be highly effective. Becton Dickinson reported that studies by two of the hospitals that installed its BD.id™ system for positive patient identification and specimen collection found nearly a 100% reduction in specimen collection errors.²

Hospitals and laboratories across Europe have reported significant error reductions related to barcode-based patient and specimen identification and point-of-care labelling.

Mobile printing to support safer, more efficient processes

Printing patient-related documents away from bedside has a number of disadvantages. Administratively, returning to a central location such as a nurse's station to pick up printed forms, tags or labels always runs the risk of returning to bedside with the wrong item, and consequently following the wrong directions for a given patient. And more time spent to-ing and fro-ing to the department printer is less time spent actively caring for patients.

Practical, easy to use and easy to clean, using mobile printing technologies to produce barcodes is becoming the definitive means of reducing errors in patient identification. Barcode wristbands help to eliminate confusion and increase staff certainty and, as a result, quality of patient care. Specimen collection, medication labelling and blood administration, all can be carried out more confidently and efficiently using mobile printing, while looking towards the adoption of electronic medical records, meeting relevant legislation and achieving budgetary and business goals.



1. Lawrence J. Bologna, MBA, MS, FACHE, Michael Mutter, MS, RPH, 'Life After Phlebotomy Deployment: Reducing Major Patient and Specimen Identification Errors', Journal of Healthcare Information Management. Winter 2002, Volume 16, Issue 1.
2. Becton, Dickinson and Company, 'Norwalk Hospital to Implement BD.id™ Patient Identification System for Specimen Management', June 2004.

For more information about how VisionID mobile printing solutions could help you to mitigate risk, improve patient safety and increase organisational efficiency, visit www.visionid.ie



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