Mobile printing: the modern way to improve patient safety and business practice.

By their nature, healthcare facilities are more exposed to risk, in various forms, than other working environments. Time is always an issue, patient health and needs will fluctuate, and priorities will change at short notice. All of these can increase the chances of mistakes being made.

A review of medication error incidents reported to the National Reporting and Learning System (NRLS over six years between 2005 and 2010 recorded 525,186 incidents where patient safety had been compromised. Of these, 86,821 (16%) of medication incidents reported actual patient harm, and 822 (0.9%) resulted in death or severe harm[1].

The challenge for healthcare managers and administrators is to minimise the risk, and ensure patient safety and more cost-effective ways of working. Which is why mobile printing is increasingly used and trusted in hospitals and healthcare facilities worldwide.

Mobile printing to support safer, more efficient processes
Printing patient-related documents anywhere but at bedside carries an element of risk. Returning to a central location such as a nurse's station to pick up printed forms, tags or labels can mean 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.

With Zebra mobile printing solutions, materials can be printed in full sight of the patient in question, eliminating the dangers of misidentification and saving precious time.

Printers such as the Zebra QLn Series are fast, easy to manage, and designed specifically for healthcare environments, so they're easy to clean. Replacing conventional printers with these purpose-built solutions offers benefits across the organisation:

For the patient
In terms of patient reassurance, labels, tags and documents printed at bedside are the most easily seen and confirmable as being relevant and correctly aligned with the individual in question.

For nursing staff
Mobile printing at bedside is the simplest means of checking that the right information is available for the right patient, saving time, inconvenience and the potential for errors when carrying specimen collection, medication labelling and blood administration.

For pharmacists
With a mobile printer, pharmacists can label a patient's personal medication on the hospital floor, which saves time walking back to the pharmacy. The hospital pharmacy can also print unit-of-use barcode labels to provide a full audit trail.

For phlebotomists
Blood transfusions are a high risk-area, where inaccurate identification can lead to potentially fatal errors. Blood bags are routinely barcoded with their type. Adding a label with the intended patient's details enables additional safety checks to be made automatically before the blood is given.

For IT
Modern mobile printers combine portability, and ease of use, reducing the workloads of the IT department to maintain productive working and simplicity of system and device updates. New technologies enable IT staff to deploy, manage and monitor printers centrally from a single PC screen anywhere on the network. Installation and configuration is fast, out of the box, and management is quick and simple with drag-and-drop functionality and wizard assistance.

For operations
Mobile printing reduces the risks associated with errors, and makes compliance simpler to achieve. By moving to an automated data-entry and verification system, many administration tasks are speeded up and simplified so that staff can spend more time with patients and less time dealing with paperwork.

These systems also improve overall visibility by providing real-time information on specimens, tests and results. They also improve staff productivity and reduce wastage of printer supplies such as ink and paper, and pre-empt the adoption of electronic medical records, meeting relevant legislation and achieving budgetary and business goals.

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

1. Cousins DH, Gerrett D, Warner B. A review of medication incidents reported to the National Reporting and Learning System in England and Wales over 6 years (2005–2010). Br J Clin Pharmacol 2012;74(4):597–604