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Bar Code Wristbands Reduce Risk & Increase Safety at Daughters of Charity Health System



Despite alarming statistics of deaths caused by preventable medical errors due to patient misidentification, as few as 3% to 5% of U.S. hospitals have implemented bar code solutions to help improve patient identification and increase patient safety.¹

The Daughters of Charity Health System (DCHS) has taken a proactive stance to do their part in increasing patient safety by implementing bar code wristband solutions.

An Effective Cure Through Positive Patient ID

The Daughters of Charity Health System is comprised of six regional hospitals and care centers spanning the California coast from the Bay Area to Los Angeles. Its sponsors are the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul who, for more than 370 years, have been serving the sick and the poor through healing ministries around the world. In California, the Daughters of Charity have been providing healthcare for over 150 years.

In keeping with its high standard of quality service, DCHS implemented an organization-wide bar code wristband system in April 2005 for all inpatients and select outpatients using Precision Dynamics Corporation's (PDC) ScanBand[®] Bar Code Wristbands.

"As we looked at initiatives in our healthcare system, our primary goal was patient safety," says Michael Day, Director of Clinical Systems Strategy at DCHS. "We wanted to select a bar code wristband that allowed us to enhance patient safety by positively identifying patients. We have already seen great results in our patient ID process since using ScanBand."

Prior to using bar code wristbands, DCHS used traditional embosser cards and machines at admissions. A key factor in choosing

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—Michael Day
Director of Clinical Systems Strategy at DCHS

(Continued from front)

ScanBand was product quality and consistency. "Legibility was an issue since the wristbands were primarily paper-based, couldn't resist water, and were often difficult to read," comments Day. "Due to the nature of embosser cards, the imprint was often of poor quality or missing characters"

Through thermal printing, ScanBand provides high quality bar codes for scanning and accurate identification. "We wanted thermal bar code bands because of their length of use and ability to withstand showers and various fluids, and still maintain the integrity of the band and the data on it," says Day.

The wristband, which features a secure and tamper-evident adhesive closure, prints in mere seconds, ensuring a quick and easy on-line admissions process. "The tamper-evident feature is a great advantage," adds Day. "It helps us prevent instances where one patient could receive another patient's procedures because it is less likely that the wristband will be switched or replaced."

ScanBand meets guidelines for HIPAA, JCAHO, FDA and AHA, which call for a "tamperproof, nontransferable identification band that minimizes the possibility that identifying data can be lost or transferred from one patient to another."

ScanBand Tested in Multiple Applications

DCHS' initial areas of focus for implementing the bar code wristbands include medication administration, lab specimen collection, and point-of-care (POC) glucose testing. ScanBand, which is worn by all inpatients at all six hospitals, contains two bar code identifiers: the patient's medical record number and account number. Also printed on the wristband are the patient's name and date of birth.

"A key area we are focusing on includes medication administration," states Day. "In the future, prior to a nurse administering medication to a patient, he/she will scan the bar code on the wristband and then scan the medication bar code before giving the medication to the patient, which will access and update the hospital's database. This process will help us meet the important five

rights of medication administration." A significant amount of identification errors occur in the laboratory during collection, comments Day. "For this reason, we have a pilot in place using specialized software in the lab in conjunction with the bar coded wristbands. We've already prevented potential patient misidentifications where a patient was scanned and he/she was the wrong person."

The hospitals also use ScanBand with their POC glucose testing which once required manual entry of the patient's medical record number. "Using ScanBand helps eliminate any occurrences of a wrong medical record since it is on the bar code; so, we can guarantee 100% testing of the right patient," says Day.



Patient Safety Is Priceless

"So far our bar code system implementation has been extremely good. Nurses like the simplicity of ScanBand and training is very simple," says Day. "Clearly, patients can see we are using this technology to more positively ID them. It's been a successful patient safety initiative."

ScanBand's print-on-demand feature allows nurses to put their focus where it's mostly needed—on the patient. "We have the capability to print and reprint wristbands at any station throughout the hospital which saves us a lot of time. Being able to quickly regenerate a wristband for any patient without any time delay is very advantageous," says Day. As a result, the number of wristbands removed prematurely by patients has greatly decreased.

When it comes to implementing a bar code wristband system it is difficult to establish a precise return on investment (ROI). "It's the cost of doing business," says Day. "It's very difficult to attach monetary benefits to patient safety and risk reduction. Although there is no written formula to demonstrate the financial impact of our bar code wristband initiative, I believe the real ROI is patient safety, which is priceless."

DCHS' Mission

In the spirit of our founders, St. Vincent de



Paul, St. Louise de Marillac, and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton, the Daughters of Charity Health System is committed to serving the sick and the poor. With Jesus Christ as our model, we advance and strengthen the healing mission of the Catholic Church by providing comprehensive, excellent healthcare that is compassionate and attentive to the whole person: body, mind and spirit. We promote healthy families, responsible stewardship of the environment, and a just society through value-based relationships and community-based collaboration.

About PDC

With nearly 50 years of experience, PDC is the global leader and pacesetter in the development of automatic identification wristband systems and quality healthcare products. The company introduced the first patient Bar Code ID Wristband System in 1984, the Smart Band® Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) Wristband System in 2000, and the AgeBand™ Electronic Age/ID Verification System in 2004. PDC also provides premium healthcare products for labor & delivery, urology, and other applications. PDC is committed to 100% quality in service, design, and manufacturing. This is substantiated by their ISO-9001: 2000 and ISO-13485: 2003 certification at their main facility in San Fernando, CA.

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7. Source: American Association of Critical-Care Nurses



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