SUCCESS STORY

Lodi Memorial Hospital Prevents Errors, Speeds Specimen Collection with Iatric Systems MobiLab®

OBJECTIVE: Lodi Memorial Hospital wanted easy-to-use barcode specimen collection that could provide 100 percent positive patient identification, prevent errors, and offer fast results.

SITUATION: Lodi Memorial in Lodi, California is an acute-care hospital and the flagship facility for Lodi Health, a not-for-profit health system dedicated to compassionate and quality care. With this goal in mind, the hospital knew it had to improve its specimen collection process. Pre-printed batch labels and inefficient communications between laboratory staff and nurses were leading to errors and slow turnaround times.

SOLUTION: Lodi Memorial now uses Iatric Systems MobiLab® to ensure positive patient identification and accurate specimen labeling. The solution combines bedside label printing, barcode scanning, and real-time communication with the hospital's information system (HIS) to make collections safer and faster. The software can run on multiple devices, providing flexibility that users appreciate. Phlebotomists normally use MobiLab handheld devices, while most nurses prefer MobiLab Desktop running on cart-mounted laptops. A new hospital wing with bedside computers and large monitors provides still another hardware option on which MobiLab Desktop runs.

RESULTS: MobiLab provides 100 percent positive patient identification before any sample is collected, and specimen labeling errors have been eliminated in all areas when MobiLab is used. Real-time orders and an improved collection process have also reduced lab test result turnaround times. With its ease of use and simple training, MobiLab has been embraced by Lodi Memorial's phlebotomists and nurses as well as doctors and hospital management.

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– Laura Johnson
Applications Analyst
Lodi Memorial Hospital

Hospitals considering barcode specimen collection always hope the transition will go smoothly. Lodi Memorial Hospital has experienced it firsthand using Iatric Systems MobiLab®, an easy-to-use solution that allows error-free, highly efficient specimen collection. All phlebotomists and nurses in the ED and on inpatient units now use MobiLab handheld devices or MobiLab Desktop whenever specimens are collected. Surgery will go live in 2014, and respiratory therapists already use MobiLab for their Arterial Blood Gas (ABG) collections.

"Orders now come directly to the user's device and can be sorted by time or location," explains Laura Johnson, Applications Analyst at Lodi Memorial. "Phlebotomists and nurses get immediate STAT alerts and notifications, they can add comments, and they (along with their supervisors) can see who needs help, such as when there are six stat orders in the ER. They also can see upcoming draws, and merge draws to reduce venipunctures. None of this was possible before MobiLab; now they have all the information they need in front of them."

The Results Are In: Safer and Faster Collections

MobiLab now identifies patients with 100 percent accuracy. An occasional error may occur only when someone tries to circumvent the process (which is very rare), and those instances are easily identified with MobiLab reports. "In addition to positive patient identification, reports alone made MobiLab worth it," says Laura. "Before MobiLab, workload reports, for example, were very, very hard — we had to compile everything by hand, and it took hours. Now it's automated, and we can see right away what staff have accomplished. Having that indisputable, detailed proof is invaluable." Specimen collection errors are zero (down from about two errors per month before MobiLab went live).

Lab test result turnaround times also have decreased, a fact appreciated by hospital physicians. "Turnaround times are huge, and something doctors are always clued into. Stat alerts appear immediately in MobiLab, so staff know about orders right away and aren't wasting time on the phone. We're communicating less, but we're communicating more effectively now," Laura adds.

How to Train 800 Nurses

"Training a nurse to use MobiLab takes about 15 minutes — maybe 20 if they ask a lot of questions," says Laura. Rather than send the hospital's 800 nurses to classroom training, they tried a different approach — training super users, sending them back to their floors, and going live, with nurses learning by doing. "Once nurses had done one or two collections, they were basically good to go. We had every medical/surgical nurse trained within three weeks."

Embraced by Caregivers and Administration

Laura acknowledges she was unsure how MobiLab would be received by phlebotomists and nurses who in some cases had spent decades collecting specimens using paper labels. She needn't have worried. "Our phlebotomists are much happier with MobiLab than when they used paper, which is amazing because we were ready for pushback. When our nurses saw how much easier it was, they embraced it. We gave a presentation of our MobiLab experience to our Board, and the 100% patient identification was huge for them, as was the reduction in errors."

Laura has some final advice for other hospitals considering moving to electronic specimen collection. "MobiLab will make you more efficient. It is definitely worth the investment because the rewards are great."

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Lodi Memorial's implementation team: Carol Hendrian, Laura Johnson, Heather Ewing, Margo Aquino, and Tim McDonald