

Hallmark Health System Eliminates Mislabeled Specimens and Improves Productivity with iatricSystems™ MobiLab®



OBJECTIVE: Hallmark Health System needed a new approach to specimen collection that would ensure positive patient identification and meet the needs of phlebotomists, nurses, and therapists in many hospital settings.

SITUATION: Hallmark Health is an award-winning provider of integrated healthcare services for Boston's northern communities. It includes two acute-care hospitals — Lawrence Memorial Hospital of Medford and Melrose-Wakefield Hospital — a cancer center, and other facilities. Despite its best efforts, labeling errors continued to occur when collecting patient specimens, and Hallmark Health was determined to find a safer, more efficient alternative.

SOLUTION: Hallmark Health evaluated several other vendors, but after careful consideration chose iatricSystems™ MobiLab®, an easy-to-use wireless specimen collection system with bar code scanning and bedside label printing that ensures positive patient identification and accurate labeling. Hallmark Health now uses MobiLab for specimen collection at its two hospitals, in the ICU, on patient floors, in the nursery, and in the ED. The handheld and the cart-mounted laptop versions provide flexibility that users in these different settings appreciate.

RESULTS: There have been zero specimen labeling errors using MobiLab since it went live. It's also a daily time-saver for phlebotomists and other staff tasked with collecting specimens, since up-to-date information about what to draw and in what order appears automatically on their device. MobiLab also saves time in the lab, where staff simply scan the barcoded label to receive the specimen, eliminating the need for manual data entry. In addition, improved reporting about collections has led to better labor decisions and improved productivity. Hallmark Health plans to roll out MobiLab to its offsite Cancer Center in 2014.

"We previously had one or two labeling errors per month. Since going live with MobiLab®, there have been zero."

— Deborah Murphy
Laboratory Information Systems Manager
Hallmark Health System

Hallmark Health System is an integrated health system providing care in a wide variety of clinical categories for communities north of Boston. Hallmark Health is nationally recognized for clinical excellence and advanced medical technology, which is why they use iatricSystems MobiLab®, a wireless barcode specimen collection system that ensures positive patient identification and accurate labeling.

Eliminates Labeling Errors While Saving Time

"Our records show we previously had one or two labeling errors per month. Since going live with MobiLab, there have been zero," says Deborah Murphy, Laboratory Information Systems Manager, Hallmark Health System. Deborah adds that MobiLab is also a daily time-saver for phlebotomists and other staff tasked with collecting specimens. "With MobiLab, they hit the floors running. They pull up the draw list on their handheld, and they're ready to go."

Before implementing MobiLab, Hallmark Health had tried several ways to reduce mislabeled specimens (annual competency testing, reminders, etc.), but nothing seemed to help. "Everyone's trying to do a good job, but accidents happen," Deborah observes. "You tear a label in the wrong place, and a tube intended for John Brown is now labeled Mary Smith. Using MobiLab, there's no risk of that happening."

Deborah notes that the new collection system has been well-received by the people who use it. "Phlebotomists were giving us hugs in the hallways — they loved it." MobiLab eliminates a grueling routine of sorting through batches of labels every morning, which had to be separated by floor and by patient. "Now they can go right up to the units because all the information is on their handheld or PC."

Patients like it, too. "When staff explain that MobiLab makes sure we have the right patient, it puts them at ease. They're certainly more comfortable than when the collector walked in with a handful of labels for different patients."

MobiLab is now used for specimen collection at Lawrence Memorial Hospital and Melrose Wakefield Hospital, Hallmark Health's two in-patient facilities. Caregivers in different units appreciate the choice of collection options. For example, some ED staff like to use a cart-mounted laptop while others prefer the handheld, which allows them to easily work on "hallway patients" (overflow patients positioned in hallways until a bay is available). Either way, MobiLab offers the flexibility they need.

"Besides improving positive patient identification, MobiLab provides us with accurate 'time collected' data compared to our previous manual process. This has led to better labor decisions and helped improve our productivity."

— Michael Biskup
Director, Laboratory Services
Hallmark Health System

Putting Collection Data to Work

MobiLab provides other important benefits as well. The ability to transmit the user ID and other collection details electronically streamlines receiving in the lab. Previously, staff had to type information that was handwritten on the tube (and often illegible). Now they simply scan the barcoded label. Another benefit is improved reporting about collections, as Michael Biskup, Director of Laboratory Services at Hallmark Health, explains. "Besides improving positive patient identification, MobiLab provides us with accurate 'time collected' data compared to our previous manual process. This has led to better labor decisions and helped improve our productivity."

MobiLab has been so successful, Hallmark Health System is looking at implementing it in other departments and at other sites in the future.