



Innovative 'In-a-Snap'® alert clasps consolidate admit and alert wristbands into one, ensuring improved patient safety and enhanced comfort.

Newest wristband alternative helps hospitals comply with important new color coding standards. Cost savings are an added bonus.

In 2005, a patient safety advisory was issued from Pennsylvania that received national attention. It brought to light an incident in which clinicians nearly failed to rescue a hospital patient who had a cardiopulmonary arrest because the patient had been incorrectly designated as "DNR".

The source of confusion was a nurse who had mistakenly placed a yellow wristband on the patient. In that hospital, a yellow wristband meant DNR. In a nearby hospital, where the nurse also worked, yellow meant "restricted extremity," which was the alert the nurse wanted to communicate. Fortunately in this case, another nurse recognized the mistake and the patient was resuscitated.

Most of us can imagine this type of near miss occurring in any institution.

Spurred by the incident, initiatives aimed at standardizing color coding throughout the United States were introduced during subsequent years. By the end of 2010 more than 40 states will have standardized color coding for patient alerts, and more are expected to follow. One state that already has complied is Arkansas, home of Baptist Health Medical Center - Little Rock (BHMC).

Eager to conform with the Arkansas standardization initiative and eliminate its policy of using multiple wristbands on patients requiring more than one alert, the hospital began a relationship with The St. John Companies of Valencia, CA, whose innovative In-a-Snap® alert clasps have been quickly finding their way into hospitals across the country.

"It is wonderful," Phyllis Dorrrough, the patient safety officer, said of the In-a-Snap®. "Not only have we ensured patient safety and eliminated the need for multiple wristbands, but we're saving the hospital thousands of dollars every year. In this challenging healthcare environment, any cost savings that a hospital can achieve is important."

Introducing Baptist Health Medical Center

BHMC – Little Rock is the largest healthcare institution under the proud banner of 80-year-old Baptist Health, a consortium of health facilities situated around the state and the fourth largest employer in Arkansas. Offering a full line of essential medical services, including cardiac, stroke, women's health, orthopedics, rehabilitation, spine and bariatrics. BHMC – Little Rock is well equipped to cover the full continuum of health care — from birth through end of life.

Equally stationed is The St. John Companies, one of the leading manufacturers and distributors of labeling, patient identification, medical imaging and medical records products for hospitals and alternate site facilities. With more than 50,000 labels designed exclusively for healthcare and a complete line of stock



and custom medical record, x-ray filing and patient identification products, St. John enables customers to consolidate their purchases while simplifying their consumable product ordering processes. The St. John Companies counts more than 80% of U.S. hospitals as active and loyal customers.

Innovative In-a-Snap®

In-a-Snap®, when combined with any snap closure Conf-ID-ent™ patient identification wristband, provides a means to safely and comfortably consolidate admit and alert wristbands into one. In-A-Snap® alert clasps are pre-printed and color-coded with patient specific alerts and snap directly onto the main admit wristband in a comfortable interleaving design. Clinicians can see all applicable alerts at a glance on the patient's primary wristband — without having to sort through numerous multiple color-coded wristbands. In-A-Snap® alert clasps are designed to ensure patient safety and comfort, meet important color-code standardization guidelines by combining colors with descriptive words relative to the alert, and eliminate the potential confusion associated with patients who require multiple wristbands. In-A-Snap® alert clasps are cost-effective, customizable, available in a wide variety of stock styles, are latex and phthalate-free, and can be added to the strap of any Conf-ID-ent™ clasp closure wristband.

Alert Products

According to Phyllis Dorrrough, BHMC had used multiple color-coded alert wristbands for many years before switching to

In-a-Snap® alert clasps in 2008. The color-coded alert wristbands were originally chosen because they were the only option available for alerting caregivers to patients with special needs.

“Multiple wristbands were working okay, but sometimes you don’t know what you’re missing until something better comes along,” she said. “This is definitely better.”

The primary issue that the hospital had identified as it looked to replace multiple alert wristbands was bulkiness — “There often were too many wristbands on one patient. Confusion wasn’t an issue, because we worked hard to make sure that staff knew the colors and what they represented. There was just too much stuff hanging down from a patient’s wrist.”

BHMC began looking for a change toward the onset of the color-code standardization initiatives in 2007. There was no overriding strategy — the hospital simply wanted to eliminate the use of multiple bands, and no other predetermined criteria were established.

Arkansas Hospital Association Partners with St. John

Early on, the Arkansas Hospital Association recognized the benefits of partnering with The St. John Companies for their wealth of industry knowledge, and utilized their services to help develop “Banding Together for Patient Safety,” their color-code toolkit. The toolkit was provided to every hospital within the state of Arkansas including BHMC. The toolkit outlined the benefits of color-code standardization, the products approved for use, and frequently asked questions. The wheels were in motion for significant change within the BHMC.

“When I realized that such a good product was available, I took it to our Clinical Quality Value Analysis Team, which standardizes our use of products across the Baptist Health system, and told them about it,” Phyllis said. “We went in with an open mind.”

Once the Team evaluated it and gave the product their stamp of approval, largely based upon its use of clasps to replace multiple wristbands, Phyllis took In-A-Snap® to the System Nursing Council, which is comprised of chief nursing officers from each of the seven Baptist Health hospitals. The Council chairperson sits on the system Senior Leadership Committee, which includes all the senior vice presidents and is chaired by the Baptist Health CEO. The Committee was the final approving authority.

“There were quite a number of people in authority involved in the process going on up the ladder before an ultimate decision was made,” Phyllis said. “Everyone loved In-a-Snap®.”

Pilot Program Initiated

Along the way, after approval by the Nursing Council, an informal pilot program was initiated using Conf-ID-ent™ wristbands and In-A-Snap® alert clasps provided by The St. John Companies. In-a-Snap® alert clasps were worn by a limited number of nurses over a six-week period, and feedback was collected from each. The effort was primarily designed to test for comfort; because the reviews were so positive, and because the system was both comfortable and functional, the In-a-Snap® alert clasps and Conf-ID-ent™ patient identification wristbands were quickly implemented hospitalwide

in 2008 and eventually systemwide. The perceived benefits proved to be real.

“I basically wanted to hear, ‘We like it or we don’t, the In-A-Snap® alert clasps work or they don’t,’” Phyllis said, noting that satisfaction with the In-A-Snap® alert clasps among the nursing staff was unanimous. She added that use of the In-A-Snap® alert clasps in concert with Conf-ID-ent™ wristbands from St. John instead of other brand identification wristbands was a given.

In Phyllis’ mind, there have been numerous benefits to In-a-Snap®: they are easy to apply, secure, eliminate the use of multiple wristbands, enhance patient comfort, raised lettering reinforces color as an alert indicator and is easy to read, and the system simplifies things for those who are charged with observing the alerts and making sure that no clinical errors occur. Perhaps most important, there is no longer a danger that bacteria might get trapped among the wristbands, compromising a patient’s health and exacerbating a serious health condition.

“The new system from St. John has saved us a lot of money,” Phyllis said. “I think it saved us about \$32,000 the first year, which was our projection. In this environment, a cost savings of even \$1,000 is a big deal. This was significant.”

It was significant to the Clinical Quality Value Analysis Team, the System Nursing Council, and the Senior Leadership Committee too. Each year those bodies must strive to identify and implement opportunities for savings within BHMC, demonstrating fiscal responsibility.

Consolidation Maximized

Under the old system, the hospital purchased 217,000 white patient identification wristbands last year. It also purchased 38,500 white wristbands for short-stay and other admits, 217,000 red “Allergy” wristbands, 18,250 orange “Fall Risk” wristbands, 1,200 fuchsia “Latex Allergy” wristbands, and 4,000 purple “DNR” wristbands — a grand total of 495,950 wristbands. Using the new system, the hospital will buy only 255,000 white patient identification wristbands each year, replacing the other 240,000 wristbands with In-a-Snap® alert clasps.

Additionally, only two colors — orange for “Fall Risk” and fuchsia for “Latex Allergy” — were changed to bring the hospital into compliance with the Arkansas color-code initiative. While colors remained virtually the same, the use of wristbands on patients is now minimized.

“Despite the use of fewer wristbands on patients, the change has been relatively seamless. Unless patients are admitted to the hospital frequently, few are likely to notice anything different,” Phyllis said.

“We’ve been very happy with In-a-Snap® alert clasps,” she said. “Not only did we achieve our goals of complying with the color-code initiative and eliminating multiple wristbands, but we also enhanced patient comfort as hoped. And, we eliminated the bacteria risk while ensuring that alerts will never be confused, although that has never been an issue with us. It’s a wonderfully functional product, St. John’s customer service is awesome, and we couldn’t be more pleased.”