



RFID and a Culture of Safety

Re: "Preventing Infections at the Hospital," Lee Ann Runy, *H&HN OnLine*, Oct. 21. I would like to discuss the critical role radio-frequency identification can play in fostering a culture of safety.

Hand-washing campaigns have little impact, hence the 50 percent compliance rate reported in the article. With RFID, clinicians and patients can be required to wash their hands prior to treating a patient in a way that a) encourages a culture of safety by requiring routine actions to take place in a certain order; and b) provides a mechanism for timely reporting and accountability.

Runy made some great points concerning the shocking annual cost (about \$5 billion), and barriers to creating a culture of safety. RFID technologies can address these in a cost-effective, timely and accurate manner.

Imagine supervisors being automatically notified if staff neglect to wash their hands prior to treating patients. This is an example of how an inexpensive RFID application could save billions of dollars. Let me explain:

ID badges have an embedded RFID tag. Strategically located readers at sinks and patient beds identify the badge's signal when within range. The range is close to the sinks, such that the clinician has to touch the faucet. For beds, a wider range is set. A rule is entered that issues an alert if the bed reader picks up the signal

without it first being sensed at the sink. A time rule requires that within one minute the ID badge is read at the sink, or a report is sent to a supervisor, entered into the patient's EHR and/or other health information systems.

ROI is rapidly realized through cost savings, risk reduction and improved patient care. And, once RFID infrastructure is installed, it can easily expand to serve additional functions.

Mika Lofton

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Refreshing, Reasoned

Re: October's cover story about the chair-elect of the American Hospital Association. I am so impressed with the thoughtful approach reflected in the sidebar article, "Rationing Reasoning." It is so hopeful to realize that folks like Richard de Filippi are involved in the issues that confront all of us, and so refreshing to see a reasoned, complex, *non-political* forum for these ideas. Thanks.

*Molly Jones
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