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LINES

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HIBCC Standards Providing Global Solutions for Patient Care:

A Report on Point of Use Bar Coding at Alfred Hospital

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The Alfred Hospital, is one of Australia's largest hospitals, and is regarded as a pacesetter in the national medical arena. Furthermore it has consistently been linked to progressive developments in acute care, medical research, health care teaching and information technology. The Alfred has a staff of approximately 4,000 and treats more than 400 thousand patients annually. It provides one of the most comprehensive range of specialist medical and surgical services in Australia and accommodates six directorates comprising 42 clinical units, offering every form of medical treatment with the exception of obstetrics and pediatrics.

The Alfred is currently implementing innovative technologies that utilize "point-of-use" barcode scanning to better manage costing and replenishment of high value medical devices in theatre and operating rooms. An added benefit of point-of-use barcode scanning is the potential it has to improve patient safety.

HIBCC standards, including the UPN Repository, are strategically important to this project, since data standards, and accurate, up-to-date data is

an essential building block to point-of-use barcode scanning applications.

IMPROVED MANAGEMENT AND TRACKING OF HIGH VALUE CONSUMABLES

The Alfred hospital is implementing a point-of-use solution called hTrak into the Radiology Department. It is possible that this solution could be implemented

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throughout the hospital in all areas where surgical procedures are performed on patients such as Cardiology, Catheter Laboratories, and Theatre.

The hTrak solution is a portable, hand held device that captures information relating to procedures performed to patients, including, wherever relevant and practical, from barcodes. The data captured includes:

- Patient details- from bar code label identification;
- Surgeon and other staff performing the procedure - from barcoded staff Identification Tags;
- Implanted devices and consumables used in the procedure - from manufacturers product bar code (the UPN), this includes all control data associated with the product, for example Serial number, Lot number, and expiry date as appropriate.

The data captured is stored on the portable device, and then synchronized to a central database. The Alfred then has the ability to produce accurate reports on all procedures, which enable them to:

- Accurately cost all procedures;
- Accurately claim all applicable rebates by health insurance funds -



Above: The Alfred Hospital, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

particularly those associated with implanted prostheses and other devices;

- Better manage the inventory and management of high value medical devices;
- Accurate tracking of implanted devices to patients, resulting in better management of recalls, when and as these occur, resulting in improved patient safety.

BAR CODE (PRODUCT ID) STANDARDS

A critical component of the Alfred's point-of-use barcode scanning solution is the existence of barcode standards for medical devices. The Alfred has adopted the Universal Product Number (UPN) standards for their application, and relies on suppliers to barcode their products to this standard. It is fitting that the

majority of medical device supplies in the high value consumable area do conform to the UPN.

HIBCC AU'S UPN REPOSITORY

One of the major issues confronting the Alfred in the implementation of the hTrak solution is the acquisition of accurate and up-to-date product data. This information is surprisingly very difficult to source in Australia, and to recreate this data from scratch by the Alfred is very costly and time-consuming.

It is for this reason that the Alfred recently joined HIBCC AU as a provider member to benefit from the UPN Repository Service that HIBCC AU provides to hospitals, and to support the uptake of the UPN repository by all suppliers of high value medical devices. The UPN Repository of

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Australia builds on work carried out by HIBCC in the USA, and has added content specific and relevant to the Australian Market.

The UPN Repository is the key to unlocking the product information needed in the Alfred's point-of-use barcode scanning application, including but not limited to:

- Supplier details;
- Product descriptions;
- Units of measure and quantities;
- Billing codes (for applicable insurance rebates)

The UPN Repository presents the data to a recognized standard specification, and uses other applicable standards wherever relevant, for example ANSI for Units of Measure definitions and ECRI-UMDNS for medical device categorization.

PATIENT SAFETY

Barcoding technology per se does not ensure that medical errors do not occur. However, barcode scanning applications provide health workers with tools that automate certain functions, and therefore take away a great deal of the administrative burden associated with, for example:

- Accurately identifying and recording patient details at each patient event or episode within the hospital;

- Accurately identifying and recording the administration of drugs and other therapies to a patient;
- Accurately identifying and tracking medical devices, including implants and surgical instruments, used in hospital procedures.

□ barcode scanning applications provide health workers with tools that automate certain functions...that take away a great deal of the administrative burden□

By freeing up healthcare professionals from the administrative, error prone tasks of manually recording information that can be provided in an automated fashion, healthcare workers are able to focus more of their time and attention to activities related directly to the treatment of their patients.

It is particularly noteworthy that the purpose of implementing the point-of-use barcode scanning application at The Alfred was not based on patient safety, but rather the justification was based on cost containment through improved supply chain management. However, the added benefit for The Alfred will be that for no additional investment they will

also achieve patient safety benefits through improved tracking and less error prone documentation of medical devices used in surgical procedures.

ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE AT THE ALFRED

The hTrak solution has been successfully implemented within the Radiology Department at The Alfred. The benefits that have been realized to date include:

- Reduction in inventory held by the hospital;
- Significant Improvement in rebate recovery from health insurance funds for procedures involving high value medical devices;
- Automation of processes, resulting in minimizing nursing involvement in inventory management and supply replenishment;
- Rationalization of product.

The next phase is to automate the non-stock requisition process directly with the vendors against standing orders, bypassing the hospital's internal requisition process. This will save on administrative costs at both ends of the supply chain and speed up the delivery process even further. ■