



## 'No-Brainer' System Improves Infusion Safety at Vermont Hospital

Joseph Goedert JUN 22, 2015 7:23am ET

It is a simple safety technology that most hospitals should be able to implement without much difficulty. That's the message Charles Still, senior systems analyst at 99-bed Southwestern Vermont Medical Center in Bennington, Vt., wants to send colleagues about a cheap and easy way to increase the safety of infusions.

At SVMC, there are up to 19 unique data elements on a patient infusion label and different departments in the hospital have different needs for their labels. Pharmacy technicians, Still notes, are concerned with IV component drug and concentrations while nurses focus on the correct patient name and drug.

Like many other hospitals, SVMC has used plain black and white labels for infusion orders. However, during the past 14 months the hospital has phased in a new type of label, with oncology/chemotherapy on board for the past four months. These labels are the same size as previous labels but are far easier to pick out the most critical information.

That's important because the average age of a nurse is 48 years and many people around that age already are using reading glasses, Still says, including him. The new labels, customized for different departments, have considerably larger font sizes for various information, with the most important details color-highlighted.

For chemotherapy, the patient name is at the top in large black font. The total drug volume and infusion rate are highlighted in yellow or green colors. And virtually every piece of information on the label has a larger font than the previous label.

A survey of nurses found substantially improved recognition of important information with 100 percent of the nurses preferring to use the new label. Still believes nurses in other organizations will quickly accept the change, but a handful of pharmacists may complain that the label distracts from seeing the medication—yet he says these are the types that don't like change anyway, so expect to face that.

The label vendor is Digi-Trax, which uses an Epson printer with programming that easily interfaces with virtually any electronic health record system, according to Still. At SVMC, the Meditech system communicates with a printer to print the selected color coded label. Three years of printer support and software costs \$3,500 per printer. Cartridges cost \$50 "and we're easily getting 1,000 labels off them," he adds.

"There is no one magic bullet for safety; only providing layer after layer of technology can help you block errors," Still says. "These labels are a no-brainer and a simple, easy layer of defense."

[www.healthdatamanagement.com/news/System-Improves-Infusion-Safety-at-Vermont-Hospital-50741-1.html?techlabs=1](http://www.healthdatamanagement.com/news/System-Improves-Infusion-Safety-at-Vermont-Hospital-50741-1.html?techlabs=1)