

Datamax M-Class Bar Code Printers: Healthcare Case Study



A 200-bed hospital was concerned about mounting costs associated with medical errors. Medical errors can include things such as incorrect drug delivery, which can result in life-threatening consequences. Medical errors can also lead to improper patient procedure documentation resulting in inaccurate charges submitted for reimbursement by insurance companies. Bar code technology was implemented in the hospital on patient wristbands for accurate tracking procedures, and on pharmaceuticals and drugs to ensure proper delivery. After several months, a thorough analysis by hospital administrators revealed that medical errors had been significantly reduced. The hospital became aware that reimbursements from the insurance companies were increasing as well, as all patient procedural costs became fully accounted for.

However, other problems were still occurring that bar coding technology alone was not fixing.

Problem

The hospital staff was not entirely convinced bar code technology was saving time, largely because access to bar code labeling equipment was restricted to administrative areas instead of on the hospital floors where the equipment was needed. The existing printers that were used to print bar codes were very large and took up quite a bit of space. As the printers did not provide network connectivity, they had to be integrated into PC workstations wherever room could be made for them. As a result, printing bar codes and accessing the labels was impossible at the point of care, or in many cases, even near the point of care, and delays in procedures like drug dosage ensued as the caregiver tracked down an available PC/Printer station to print the necessary bar code labels.

Administrators also needed a more organized system of where to place task-specific printers, preferably placing patient bar code wristband printers in the admissions office, one at a nurse's station that would only print procedure/lab identification labels, and so on. The hospital did not have enough printers in place to have dedicated printers assigned to each printing need. Caregivers were spending too much time reconfiguring a printer for each separate label format each time they needed to perform a new task, such as printing out a patient file or specimen labels. Again, the existing printers were very large and required a PC station to operate them. Due to space constraints, the hospital placed printers solely on the basis of where there was room.



The hospital needed compact printers that could easily fit into any type of station where bar code labels would need to be printed, i.e., nurse, patient-care, lab, and medical records stations. The hospital needed enough compact printers that could easily fit into the applicable stations. Medical records, nurses, patient care, and lab stations all needed their own printers that could read, upload, and print out bar code information specific to these departments. In short, nurses and attendants needed to spend less time refilling the printer's label supply and more time attending to the patients!

Solution

The hospital discussed its problems with a systems integrator who was also an authorized Datamax reseller. The reseller accompanied nurses on their rounds and saw that the printing situation was indeed creating headaches and frustrations for caregivers who had to track down a free printer or stand in line for one, and for administrators who had to deal with printers slow at outputting patient wristbands and labels. The reseller suggested Datamax M-Class MCL-enabled printers. With the Datamax printer running MCL, the printer essentially becomes a data collection terminal. The printer is capable of collecting and processing data from bar code scanners or any other serial input device including weight scales and keyboards. The Datamax MCL-enabled printers can process data and update remote databases hosted on the hospital's network. Since they are compact in size, more Datamax M-Class printers can fit into various stations at the hospitals; in fact all patient-care stations are now equipped with at least one dedicated printer that performs tasks specific to that station's needs. For example, bar code wristband printers are in the admissions office, and patient procedure labels are loaded in printers in the nurses' stations.



Now caregivers can quickly print out a patient's updated information before visiting the patient, and can make immediate decisions about dosage and other patient care issues. In fact, the hospital purchased several Datamax M-Class printers that can fit on any nurse's cart equipped with a dedicated power supply, so nurses can print out specimen labels right at the point of care.

Administrators never need to leave their stations now for their printing needs, nor do they have to share their printers with non-administrative staff. High print volume and speedy printing are standard features in the Datamax M-Class printers, and administrators are getting incoming and outgoing patient information completed much faster now.

Results

Within one week, administrators noticed a change in the personnel's attitude towards bar coding. Everyone stated that the addition of new, compact and speedy printers made all the difference in fully utilizing bar coding technology.

Within one month, administrators noticed other changes: the patient's admissions to caregiver lead time was shortened by almost fifteen percent, and on average, hospital stays were shortened by almost ten percent. Having made no other major changes in technology or procedures, the hospital credited the Datamax printers for the new savings in time, costs, and improvement in overall patient care and staff efficiency.

For more information on how you can successfully implement Datamax products into your application, please contact us using the information below or visit www.datamaxcorp.com.

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